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# INTO THE LIGHT

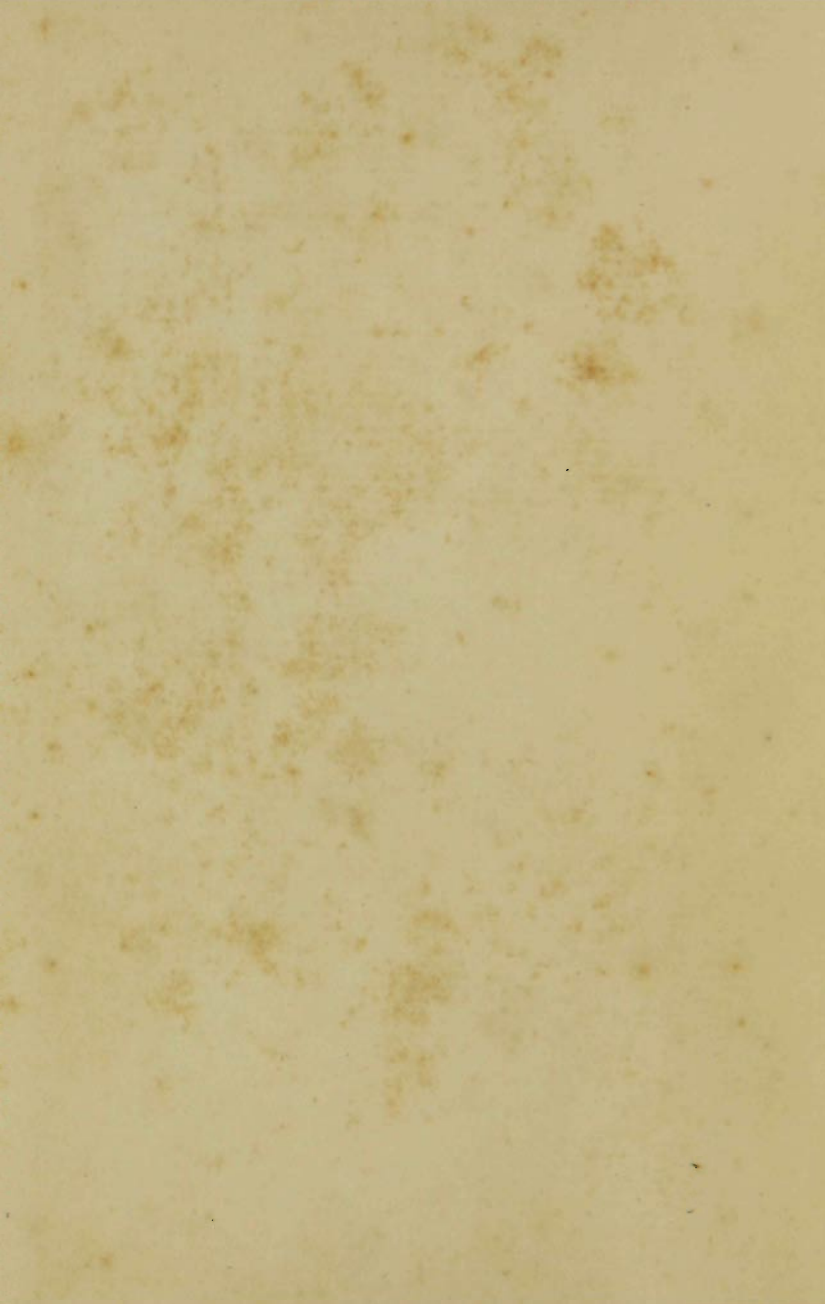
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with love from  
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*Limited,*

ST. DUNSTON'S HOUSE, FETTER LANE, E.C.



# INTO THE LIGHT

BY

MAUD JEAN FRANC

AUTHOR OF "MARIAN," "MINNIE'S MISSION," AND OTHER STORIES.

*NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION*

LONDON

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY

*Limited*

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# PART I.

## INTO THE LIGHT.

"The light shineth in darkness."—JOHN i. 5.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### LIGHT'S DAWN.

"ARE the children in bed, Bessie?" asked my eldest brother, coming quietly up to me as I stood at the window, one evening long ago, looking out into the gloaming at the shadows and the moonlight between them.

"All in bed, Sid," I answered, turning gladly towards him, for I knew he wanted something from me, and it was so pleasant for me to feel that I could add to the happiness or comfort of that tall, big fellow, and that he *preferred* my help to any other.

"I want you to come to the willow at the end of the garden. I have just been there, and it's a perfectly different climate to this. Come—you want a rest as much as I do, and I dare say feel as little inclination for the garish light of the lamp."

"I suppose I shall not be wanted just yet," I answered, rather hesitatingly, though I gladly responded to his invitation in my heart.

"Wanted? No, of course not—only by me, and I'm *one* of the children, please to remember, Miss Bessie."

*He* one of the children! How I laughed at the idea—a quiet little laugh—for, as we wanted no followers, we stole softly out, intending to have a good time all to ourselves. Out we went, through the little gate into the old bowery fruit-garden, all fragrant with ripening apricots and strawberries, gliding from shadow to shadow of the heavy-foliaged trees, till we emerged at length into the moonlight, and, passing through another tiny wicket, came upon a narrow winding path, through an acre of lucerne almost as fresh and green and fragrant as the fruit and flowers we had left behind us, though with a different kind of fragrance, and rustling with a soft, tremulous motion as the night breeze swept over it. Along the narrow path, flooded by the moonlight, and then down—down into the shadow again.

There swept the willow—Sid's favourite willow—and beneath it murmured, and tumbled, and quivered, the creek, with its soft grassy banks and rocky jutting, half in the shadow, half in the moonlight.

We sat down on a rocky boulder underneath the willow, side by side, with the water at our feet, and the moonlight trembling fitfully through the gracefully-sweeping branches. How still it was—we could hear our own breathing—though, as we sat there in silence, other sounds mingled with it—the chirp of the grasshopper, the croak of the frogs, the crying of the night-hawk, and now and then the dismal hooting of some distant owl. It was all so delicious, we



scarcely wanted to speak. We were resting—both of us—I with my head in its old place on my brother's broad shoulder, he with one arm thrown over the rock, the hand of the other holding mine in a warm clasp.

"Do you like it here, Bessie? Does it rest you?"

"Oh, yes, it is lovely here. Did you think I needed resting, Sid?" I presently asked, and there was slight wonder expressed in my question.

"Yes, I think you do," he answered, turning and looking at me. "Your face has worn a very weary aspect lately, Bessie—*unrested*, that's just the term I want. I suppose you have not many moments to yourself. Ours is a busy family, and all must take their share of work; but I sometimes think a little more rest would do you good."

"I do not think that I have too much to do in general; it is not that. The children of course are troublesome sometimes, but they are good enough when I have them alone. I like teaching them; I like to spare mamma all the trouble I can, and to keep them out of Jenny's way, for she can do best without them. I do not know why I should be weary, but it is true, I am."

"I know you are, Bessie; and I know I am often enough, but it is a sort of weariness that physical labour helps. A little, quiet chat down here in the moonlight is restful now and then, but a life of idleness would not give rest. I do not think we either of us want that."

"I am sure I don't," I answered, leaning forward and laying a slender strip of willow that hung low to

and fro in the waters. "I do not know exactly what it is I am weary of—everything, I think, but you, Sid!" I continued, suddenly loosing the bough, which bounded back to its place, sprinkling us with a tiny shower. "I do not see why you should feel so—you who are so good and strong."

"Ah, Bessie! there is the secret of it. It is because I am *not* good that the *unrest comes*—because I know it, I mean, and cannot alter it."

"And, I suppose," I presently answered in a low, musing voice, as soon as I could speak for surprise, "I suppose it must be the same with me."

"I think it is the same—I believe it is the same," said Sidney gravely. "We are much alike in many things—*mentally*, I mean. With me this feeling of sin is very wearying; it is a heavy burden to struggle under day by day."

My feelings exactly. How wonderingly I looked up at him as his mind interpreted mine. Day after day I had been feeling just this—a heavy depression, a sense of sin, a longing after holiness, the oppression of darkness, a thirst for the light. But how strangely it had all come about. I never used to trouble about being "good" as I now began to understand the word. Indeed, few thoughts beyond those of an earthly nature had ever troubled me, and God was seldom in my thoughts. Yet ours was not what would have been termed a *heathen* family. As many of us as could were accustomed to attend chapel service on Sunday, or church—sometimes one and sometimes the other. We had plenty of Bibles on our shelves, but it is true they were seldom opened. Hitherto none

of us had thought much of eternity or the life to come ; and yet we were dying creatures !

I had nothing to answer Sidney when he spoke of this burden of sin. I merely laid down my head again upon his shoulder and sighed.

"You used not to care about all this once, Sid," I presently managed to say, very softly though, for the tears would keep coming into my eyes, and I did not want him to find that out.

"No, Bessie—it is a new notion, I own. But I must have been blind all my life not to have discovered that I was all wrong before. If we were mere creatures of instinct, such as the dogs or horses, and had no souls—souls that *cannot* die, that must live in happiness or misery—on—on—for ever—why, then we might take it easily. But we know it is not so. We know we have souls, that they must live, and yet we are making no provision for their future ! It is perfect blindness, it is madness."

I had never seen him so deeply moved ; it frightened me. I did not know what to answer. His mind had worked further than mine, his unrest was deeper seated. I took my woman's refuge in tears, and was silent for a few minutes, and so was he, till at last I sadly exclaimed,—

"What can we do, Sid ?"

"Ah, Bessie, that's the rub. I thought that perhaps *you* could have suggested something. I feel the burden, but I can't get rid of it."

We neither of us in those days knew anything of Bunyan's Pilgrim, or how he lost *his* burden, at the foot of the cross. Indeed, how should we ? Life had



hitherto been to us like the brook in the shadow of the wood—it came out of the shadow into the sunshine at last, and so we were coming slowly, creepingly yet, here a little flickering of light, there a gleam through the shadow coming from above us, uncertain and flickering, it is true, but a sparkle of the true light that leadeth to everlasting day.

“He hoped that I could help him!” I thought in wonderment. “I, so helpless, so needing instruction, he so strong in body and in mind, and yet he thought that I might suggest something! What could I do? What could I say?”

“Sid, dear,” I presently answered in low, broken tones, “I know so little, so very little, I never thought much of these things before. But don’t you remember *one* thing that old man said the other evening, that if we wanted *help* in anything we must *ask* for it—ask for it from God?”

My voice was hushed and awed by the solemn words I uttered. Sidney made no reply. Perhaps, like me, he, too, was awed by their weight and solemnity. Whatever he thought, moment after moment went by in silence. The brook ran babbling on, the moon rose higher in the heavens, and a flood of silvery light came streaming through the trees, in full, but quiet, calm beauty, and there we sat, hand in hand, silently thinking—of what?

My thoughts were in a maze. It was all so strange. Words uttered during a casual visit by a stranger’s lips, a stranger we might never see again, had suddenly brought a darkness into our lives; or rather, a ray of light revealing the darkness that had before existed



—only we had not known it. “Flee from the wrath to come” seemed echoing in our ears, but we knew not whither to flee.

“Ask of God the help you need!” My own words came strongly back to me. It seemed an easy matter to ask help from a human being—but from God! How could we dare? He so great and mighty, could He listen to our requests? Our Bibles lay upon our shelves. We might have known more of Him, but we knew so little of their contents. We had heard them read at church or chapel often enough; we had bowed our heads when the minister prayed, because others did so. We knew, also, that he was asking blessings from God, but then he, of course, was a *good* man; he was authorized to do so. *We* were sinners. Ah, yes, we had found that out, both of us. We had never loved God, and how could we ask aid of Him of Whom we had never even thought?

Sidney sat a long while without speaking, looking down into the waters that tossed and tumbled at his feet—something like his own troubled spirit. But he presently rose to his full height, and wearily stretched out his arms.

“It’s right, depend upon it, Bessie. It’s *the* way, no doubt, to get help, and I don’t see how else we can obtain what we need. But it’s a difficult thing to do, nevertheless, to those who know so little about God, to those who have never prayed before in their lives.”

“Do you think we might learn more about it from the Bible?” I hesitatingly asked. “You know, Sidney, dear, it is the Bible that is read in church,

and what that old man told us he said was all from the Bible—God's Word he called it."

"Well, Bessie, we can but try. You take a Bible, I will do the same. We will honestly search. Between us, perhaps, we may learn what is right," and he sighed heavily as he said so. It was such a new way to him—so it was to me. We were both so ignorant in these matters, and I knew it must be harder for his manly nature to bow down like a little child to instruction than for me. So we presently went slowly back to the house, sadder than we left it, but resolved to seek for ourselves.

"I am going away up to the run in the morning, Bessie. I shall take my Bible with me. I shall be away for nearly a week. When I come back we will have an hour or two down here again, and compare notes." He said this just as we entered the back door. I had only time to answer "Yes," for my name was called from the kitchen, and I had to run in.

## CHAPTER II.

### MORE LIGHT.

EARLY as it was when Sidney left home next morning, I was up and in the old dining-room, ready to pour out his coffee for him, and pay him any other little attentions that he needed. We had no chance of saying anything to each other, for Gussy was breakfasting at the same table, and young Miller, from the next farm to ours, and he had the most of the talk, as he generally has. He is always so full of

life and spirits, it is impossible for any one to be dull long in his presence. "He comes in with a laugh, and goes out with a roar," so Gussy says; and I verily believe he is right, for he is so funny that his auditors have to "roar," whether they will or not.

We were a very merry party that morning; indeed, we had to close the door leading to the bedrooms, and the dining-room door, too, to shut out the noise of the fun. It was a glorious day. The air at that time in the morning (it was not four o'clock) was deliciously soft and cool, and the eastern sky was aglow with delicate carmine tints and gleams of golden radiance. For the young men the ride to the distant run was pleasant excitement. The cattle they were taking out were quiet enough, but there were wild ones to encounter, subdue, and bring in. They liked the work—Gussy especially—as what country-bred youth of seventeen would not?

I glanced several times covertly at Sidney as he laughed and chatted with his friend, looking so noble and strong and handsome in his cool, white clothes and light felt hat with its blue veil. Had he forgotten all about our evening's talk? and had morning really dissipated his care? I could not tell; it had not done so with mine; the under-current was the same. I was just as fearful, just as anxious as ever, though I could not help laughing at Frank Miller's droll speeches, and entering a little into their enjoyment of the present.

After all, I found he had not forgotten, for as they mounted their horses and rode away, he turned back



to the fence against which I was leaning, and, stooping towards me, whispered,—

“Don’t forget, Bessie.”

“Oh, no, Sid, I will not. But how will you manage?”

“The best way I can,” he answered, the gloom coming over his face again. “Any way, I am provided with the means for search,” and he placed his hand on his pocket, where the outline of a side of a small book was visible. It was his Bible.

I stood watching them till they were far out of sight. The trees closed my view just as the road wound itself round the bottom of the hill. Then I slowly turned away—not into the house again. It was so early—only five o’clock—nobody would be stirring for more than an hour, and all that time I could have to myself. So I went on dreamily through the farmyard, where the fowls were already up, and early chanticleer chanting his morning song of triumph from the handle of the well, and his feathered wives, with their troops of tiny downy little ones, finding abundant employment round the haystack close at hand.

As I passed the stable my favourite “Brownie” put out his head and whinnied. I took up a handful of grass that had sprung up by the fence, and gave it to him, with a caressing pat or two, and then went on through the little gate to the orchard. I did not go further—I might be wanted; so I chose out one of the most bowery trees I could find—a splendid old apricot, full of leaf and bowing down with the weight of fruit, just now turning golden, and rife with fragrance and beauty. Underneath its

branches I sat down on a little rude seat the boys had made for their own accommodation, and took out my book.

A little old book with a common leather cover and red edges to the leaves. I don't know to whom it belonged. I had picked it up somewhere on account of its size. It could be so easily kept in the pocket. The type, to be sure, was very small—diamond type I think they call it; but in those days small type was no drawback—it was the very thing I wanted, type and all.

But where to begin my reading? I was so ignorant of it all that I did not know where to commence. I had come to “the well of living waters” indeed; but there was a stone upon the mouth of the well, and I wanted it rolled away before I could drink of the cooling water. I turned over page after page.

John's gospel! What did I know about John? There was a fine old engraving hanging up in our sitting-room, in a massive curious old oak frame—a sort of heirloom in the family. I know my mother had prized it for that reason, and we children were accustomed to look at it with a kind of reverence. It was the three apostles—Peter, James, and John—and the artist, whoever he was—I don't know that I ever heard his name—had caught the character of each, and the three heads stood out life-like from the frame. It was John's face, however, that I was never tired of looking at. There was something in his large, deep, earnest, loving eyes that fascinated me, even when I was a child; and I remember being told once when very little—so little that I was lifted in



some one's arms to look at the picture—that that was the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” I never forgot it ; nor another old tale that I heard about the same Apostle when he was very old—so old that he could only be carried amidst the congregated Christians—how he used to spread out his hands and simply utter the words, “Little children, love one another.” Day after day the same old tale of love. He might well have those eyes. Ah ! thought I, I will read all he has written. I will begin with him—“In the beginning was the Word, the Word was *with God*, and the Word *was God*.” I did not comprehend it, but read on and on in a mist—the same verses over and over again. John was a witness—of whom ? Of the *Light*. The true Light. But *who* or what was this Light of which John witnessed ? “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” Was it indeed Christ of Whom John spake ? and I glanced up at the heading of the chapter—“*The divinity, humanity, and office of Jesus Christ*.” I had not noticed that before, and read once more with increased interest till I came to the words, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

This is what Sidney and I wanted—this *power* ; and *He—Christ*—gives it to those who *believe* in His name. Yes, I could see that, we must believe in Him to ask. “It seems all very right and natural, but oh, so difficult !” I sighed as I closed the book and sat dreamily considering the words, my elbows on my knees and my face in my hands. God seemed so

far off in those days, I could not realize that any prayer of mine could reach His ear. And yet I could not give it up. I had found out that I was a sinner, and I wanted to get rid of my sin; but this asking—oh, this asking!—it seemed so strange.

Yet as I sat there under the apricot-tree, looking through the leafy maze with eyes brimful of tears, my heart was saying over and over again, “Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” And that was prayer, though I knew it not; and I was going to the right source through all my blindness and darkness—the only source where I could get enlightenment, or help, or comfort.

Somehow the very words had a tranquillizing effect, and I rose at last and went slowly back to the house, with just a little glimmering of light in my darkness. I had set out upon a search for truth. I was not going to give it up. No, nor would Sidney, and light must come at last.

It was an hour since I took my seat under the apricot-tree, and now, as I returned to the house, I saw the servants were up and busy. My sister’s bedroom-window was open. I caught sight of her through the curtain, but as I did not want her to see me, or to have her questioning me as to where I had been and what I had been about, I crept round the back way, passed the kitchen, and so on to my own tiny room, for I possessed that blessing, a room to myself, exclusively my own, though my young sisters and little brothers slept in a large chamber adjacent to mine, through which I had the oversight.

I was, in fact, their teacher. I had the whole care

of their education devolving on me. Jenny and I had been favoured with many advantages. We were really accomplished for country young ladies, but Jenny detested teaching, and disliked being bored with children; besides, she was engaged to be married, and preferred entering largely into domestic pursuits. I was very well contented that it should be so, for I loved the children, and they loved me, and on the whole gave me much less trouble than elder sisters often experience when placed in a similar position. I was fond of music and painting and all pretty things. It was no pain to me to impart knowledge, for I liked it, but I did get rather an over-share of trouble sometimes, for my supervision extended far beyond the schoolroom. I had to look after the whole five children, and see that they did not get into mischief. I was responsible for all the torn clothes and crushed hats and broken windows, and it did come rather heavily sometimes on a young girl of nineteen. But then mamma was so delicate, and Jenny washed her hands of the whole affair. So there was nothing to be done but to quietly submit.

Already as I passed the door of their room there was an outcry for Bessie. Maude, and Lilly, and Alley were in different stages of dressing; they all wanted a little aid, chiefly in the arrangements of their hair, for Maude was only eleven. But it was the two little boys, Freddy and Lennie, who claimed my immediate attention. They were anxious to be up and dressed, and meanwhile were engaged in a hearty game of romps with their pillows. This



would never do. Mamma's morning nap would be disturbed, and papa would feel annoyed. So I coaxed them out of their romps, got them quickly dressed and washed, and sent all five out for a run in the fresh morning air before breakfast.

It was such a lovely morning, the soft air came in at the widely-opened windows, and wandered all over the room as I turned over beds and uncovered mattresses and folded away the children's clothes. The birds were in full chorus, as they often are before the heat of the day comes on, and but for that one thought of heaviness that weighed me down, I could have sung with them, could have echoed their gladness for all the beautiful things that God has made. That one thought, and it would not be driven away, but with it came again and again the cry, "Lord, help me !"

" An infant crying in the night—  
An infant crying for the light,  
And with no language but a cry."

Yes. Tennyson's words fully described my state of feeling that lovely December morning.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE LIGHT IN A CLOUD.

It was a very busy day that followed my early morning in the orchard. I had double duty thrust upon me ; for after breakfast, just before I went into the schoolroom, Ernest Merton, my brother-in-law elect, came and took Jenny off for the whole day, so our

teaching was of a very desultory nature. I was called away so many times, that at last it became necessary to give up the attempt altogether, and then I really think it was worse, for mamma's head was bad, and she could not bear the least noise; and it was almost impossible to restrain the wild young spirits. What could I do? My own head began to ache badly before the day was half over, and I felt harassed, and worried, and grieved—all in one.

Five young rebellious spirits! Maude was quite old enough to take care of the little ones if she only would have done it; but she was too wild herself—too fond of mischief and merriment, and once out in the air, and away from the restraint of the school-room, and there was no subduing her. However, I managed to get through the day in some fashion or other, and when Jenny returned they were all off to bed, and mamma was better, and I—well, I thought I was bearing up famously, and took my place quietly with the rest at tea, saying nothing about my bad headache, and pretending to eat, for I had nothing else to do. But somehow or other everything suddenly seemed strange and still—the voices grew distant, a mist came over the lamp—for it was late, and even the short twilight had passed—and then—and then—

I was lying on the sofa, with water on my forehead and smelling-salts at my nose. My father was bending over me and Jenny bathing my head.

“Why, Bessie, my girl, how is this?” said my father, gently putting me back as I attempted to rise.



"My head!" I faintly replied. "I will go to bed, if you please, papa."

"So you shall, my girl, after you have taken this camphor. There—now I will carry you up to your room." And he took me in his strong arms right away, while Jenny and our Mary, the cook, followed to put me in bed.

After a little, when the faintness had worn off, they left me alone in my cool, quiet room. Presently the great waves of pain grew less violent, and I lay worn out and passive on my pillow, looking out through the open window into the moonlight. I could see only the tops of the trees, but they were all silvered over with the full, pure rays, and the sky above was such a soft, dark blue, with here and there a bright star. It tranquillized and soothed me—I scarcely knew why.

In the distance I could hear the merry voices in the drawing-room—Jenny's light laugh, Ernest's full, deep tones, and papa's rich old voice. The sounds did not disturb me, because they were so softened and subdued by distance and closed doors. Now and then, when the door opened, the hum of conversation became more distinct. But I was glad of the quiet—glad of the semi-darkness of my still chamber—glad to be a little freer from the throbbing pain. The fainting had left, no doubt, a dreamy, listless kind of feeling. It was delicious, it was luxury to be undisturbed.

The house quieted down after a while. Jenny came in to see if I was better or needed anything, and then she too went off to bed, and a great stillness

fell over everything—on that stillness the pain in my head gradually died out, but even then I could not sleep. I did not want to sleep, but lay with wide-open eyes, looking out upon the clear soft sky and its gleaming stars, upon the leaves shimmering in the moonshine, and involuntarily the words of David's grand old psalm came into my mind—

“When I consider the heavens that are the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars which Thou hast made, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?”

And it was to this God I was to bring my wants—my desires! He so high, so mighty, would He regard me?

“What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” came again and again as a soft refrain—*mindful—mindful*—oh! how sweet it sounded—how much did that little word contain! Why not mindful of me? Oh! how could I doubt Him?

Hey—but I needed to know God in Christ Jesus, in His anointed one, before I could feel how near, how very near, He is to His children. How He sympathizes with them. How He, as their elder brother, cares for them. Having Himself passed through all, realized all, being in all points like tempted. I had yet all this to learn, and it was hard to believe that the “God who rolled the stars along would be mindful of even the weakest of His creatures.”

For between me and this good, this mighty God, a barrier seemed to rise—the barrier of my sins!

As I lay there in the calm, still midnight hours.

the pain in my head nearly gone, and only the weakness left, the words that had struck me in the opening of that first chapter of John came back to me, and I found myself repeating them over and over again—"The divinity, humanity, and offices of Jesus Christ." His divinity, as God; His humanity, as man—the *God-man*. Yes; I knew that much. I knew that Jesus was Divine as well as human, though I had thought of it little before. I knew that He died for sin. I had heard it often enough at church, but I had not learnt to come to the cross to leave my sins at its foot. How I needed teaching! What a faint glimmer of light was there yet in my future!

And how was it faring with Sidney? Should we ever solve our difficulty? and out of our darkness come into the broad, pure light?

Thinking and thinking of this, and only this, I fell at last into a quiet sleep, and never woke till a hand was placed gently on my head, and a voice sounding in my startled ear, exclaiming,—

"Bessie!"

And there stood Jenny at my bedside with a nice little breakfast-tray, looking rather alarmed because she had found it so difficult to wake me.

"Why, Jenny!" I exclaimed, sitting up in bewilderment, "have I slept late? Why did not some one call me?"

"You were sleeping so heavily papa said we must not wake you."

"Oh, but I can get up now." I was feeling weak still, however, and a little throb of pain came to warn me that my head was not quite recovered.



"No," said Jenny. "Papa says you are to lie still and take your breakfast, and that I am to see you take it. You are very pale, and I think he is right."

"But it seems so ridiculous to lie here, and have you waiting upon me," I faintly expostulated.

"Does it? I don't think so. But what made you ill, Bessie? What were you doing when I was away?"

"Oh, nothing particular. All sorts of things. I don't know that I have been quite well lately, I am always so tired."

"Well, you must rest now—papa insists upon it—and take your breakfast, dear, and I'll tell you a secret or two."

I did not want any breakfast, but I tried to eat to please her, and to do as papa wished. Dear old papa, he was always so kind! I did not feel much like listening to any secrets either, and yet I wondered, too, what Jenny could have to tell me.

"It partly concerns you, and partly concerns me," she continued, with a shy blush, "and I had better tell you the last half first. Bessie, I am going to be married in a month."

"Are you really? Oh, Jenny!"

"Yes. I thought it would surprise you, though Ernest and I have been engaged some months now. So you must get well as fast as you can, dear, for we shall have so much to do."

"Yes," I answered, and I suppose wearily, for Jenny quickly added, "You need not worry about that though, for we are to have extra help. Papa



says you need a rest, and you are to have it. And now for the other half of my tale. You are to change this work, Bessie—to take my place and get a chance of going about a bit. We are going to have a governess for the children. Papa says it must be done ; and, as I said before, I think he is right.”

“ Oh, Jenny.” It was all I could answer, but the tears came into my eyes, and the pain shot through my head—through and through—and I sank back half fainting on my pillow.

“ What is the matter with me ? ”

“ The matter is this,” said Jenny quietly. “ I have been a stupid girl to talk to you, but I did not know your head was so bad. Papa must come and see you himself. Why, darling, you are not going to be ill, surely ? ”

And then I cried.\* How I did cry, as if I never should stop any more, and Jenny bathed my head and face, and tried to soothe me, and finally went off for papa.

Even now I seem to see his dear, kind face bending over me, as he felt my head and my hands, and looked at me with anxious eyes.

“ Never mind, my girl,” he at last exclaimed, “ you have had too much on your young shoulders, I suspect. We will have things different now. So just lie still and *rest*, and Dr. Mortimer shall give you something to relieve your head ;” and so saying he drew the curtain to exclude the light, and with a kiss left me, in order to send for the doctor.

“ I am afraid she is going to be ill, poor child,” I

heard him say, as he passed out of the room, followed by Jenny. "She is decidedly feverish."

And I felt that I was, too, for my temples were throbbing wildly, and my head was burning, and I lay passive among my pillows, with no inclination or power to move. But through all the pain came the one great question, surging uppermost in my mind, "What to do with my sins." And here I was going to be ill—I might even die—and that question was unanswered.

For the next few days I had few connected thoughts. A low fever had set in, so I heard the doctor say; and I believe that for the greater part of the time I was delirious—my mind wandering over the past, all things strangely mingling together, the one important matter veining all. Jenny must have found out the secret of my great trouble in those days—for old Mary did (so she afterwards told me), and wept with both joy and sorrow to hear me.

Sidney came home in the midst of my illness, and, sorely distressed, insisted on seeing me; but I did not know him, for it was at a time when the fever seemed at its height, and my mind wandered most frequently. Still, even then there were lucid intervals, and for one of these he waited—patiently waited.

"Do you not know me, Bessie?" he asked, in a low voice, as at last I fixed my eyes upon him.

"Sidney," I faintly answered, "God is *mindful* of us. Do you not know *that*?" It was all I said intelligibly, for I rambled off again; but the words from my fevered lips came with double force. He went away, with tears choking his utterance—away

to his own room, where he threw himself on his bed, with one cry on his lips,—

“Lord, spare her—spare her, and make us both Thy children.”

“Mindful—God is mindful of us!” Where had he seen those words; where had they come from? Where had Bessie heard them?

He took his Bible, and turned over the leaves again and again, but he could not find the words. Instead of that his eye fell upon other words that set him thinking and praying, too,—

“Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

How sweet those words sounded to one who was seeking rest and finding none! Sidney took in the gist of the words, but he could not yet realize it, especially when his little sister was lying in danger below, and he might never more seek for the kingdom with her. And so, saying again and again, “God, spare her! Oh, spare her!” he sank off into a fitful slumber.

## CHAPTER IV.

### POINTS OF LIGHT.

THERE are periods in the lives of almost every one so signalized by suffering or trouble or, maybe, joy, that their impress remains indelibly fixed on the memory. The time when, the place where, with all the thousand little incidents attending, are as the sun pictures, so strongly photographed in the mind that they are never afterwards forgotten, and can be



recalled in a moment with one flash of our mental vision.

So perfectly can I bring back to memory the first dawns of restored consciousness after many days of low fever, during which, as I afterwards learned, my life had been despaired of, and appeared to hang almost on a thread. I woke from a long sleep—a saving sleep it had been to me—with a thrill of renewed life in my veins; languid yet, too languid to move or do anything but quietly take in the scene before me. It was late in the afternoon. I knew that by the shadows that were falling, and by the glint of the sunshine that fell among the trees in the garden, for the blind was raised, and a sweet, soft air—odorous with many flowers—came in at the open window. The sky was one clear, pure blue, flecked by one or two clouds like snow wreaths, touched by gold and rose from the glory in the west. A Lady Macartney rose that had climbed to my window was slightly quivering its fair leaves and blossoms in the scented breeze. How fair they looked to me; how beautiful was everything without!

It was so quiet, so calm, so still, yet I felt that I had come out of some trouble into this calm; troubled dreams, perchance. But then, why was I so weak, so powerless? I held up my hand and looked curiously at it, thin, white, and transparent. Have I been ill? I turned slightly to look around, but as I did so there was a quick movement from the opposite corner of the room, and Jenny came eagerly forward.

“Bessie, darling, you are better.”



"Have I been ill? and, Jennie, did they tell me you were married?"

"You have been very ill, dear. No, I am not married. I have been nursing you; but you must not talk, darling, you must take this;" and she fed me with a few spoonfuls of something light and nourishing, and presently my eyes closed and I slept again.

A long, quiet, peaceful sleep, calm as an infant, with low, regular breathing—so they said; no wonder that I was stronger and better, when at last the slumbers passed and I again opened my eyes.

The window-curtains were drawn now, and a soft light from the lamp was over the room. Everything looked pleasant round me. The muslin curtains of my bed, with their loopings of pink ribbon, the drapery at the toilet-table, with all its familiar belongings—scent-bottles and fancy boxes and trinkets, my little gold watch ticking away in its marble stand, and close by a slender vase, with two or three choice rosebuds and a sprig of jessamine in its tiny cup. Nothing to remind one that it was a sick room, excepting perhaps that one little stand with its physic-bottle and glass, and smelling-bottle, and some jelly in a crystal saucer (all was so delicately neat and well ordered), or possibly the large chair drawn out of its place and near the lamp. There was no one there, however, only a book turned down upon its face lay on its broad arm. I was apparently alone, but I wanted nothing, only it seemed so good to be lying there, free from pain, and under no necessity to move, so good to feel renewed life coursing once more through my veins; and, as I

thought that, there came back again the memory of the old words, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" A glad thrill passed over me with those words, and as it did so some one stole quietly into the room and sat as quietly down in the great chair. It was Sidney.

"Sid!"

What a glad flush came over his face! He rose instantly and came to my side.

"My little Sis, you are better! I see you are," he softly whispered, with the same gladness in his voice.

"Yes, so much better, only weak," I answered, clasping my thin hands round his big shoulder.

"We will soon make you strong again, darling, if that is all," he replied, taking the jelly and putting the grateful spoonfuls into my mouth. How refreshing it seemed, though I was soon tired even of that.

"I will call Mary," he continued; "she is only lying down in the next room. She has something better and stronger for you, and we must feed you up now."

"Not yet, Sid, dear; stay a little, it seems so good to have you by me," I whispered faintly, for I was feeling my weakness now.

"It is so good to be with you, darling," he answered, kissing me, "but the doctor's orders are strict, we must not let you talk."

And so we remained for a little hand in hand—not speaking. It was satisfaction enough for me to feel that he was there, and that from some strange mysterious distance I had come back to him; that there

was something we had yet to do together, and that now it would be done. I was not very clear what, I had almost forgotten, for I suppose my mind was yet weak, but the thought, uncertain as it was, brought peace with it. A little point of light seemed to steal upon me through the mental darkness, and I lay still, with a sense of coming brightness upon me.

"This will never do, little girl," Sidney said at last, gently loosing my hands. "I promised Jenny and Mary to call them the moment you woke, and I am going to leave you in their charge till morning. It is midnight now, and my watch is over," he added with a smile, and with a good-night kiss he left the room.

And then Jenny came in, and Mary, and with loving hands I was ministered to and cared for till I slept again in delicious weariness. This was my first return to the every-day world, which in the future was to wear a new aspect for me. I remember it all so clearly, and the same feeling of safety and rest comes over me now as it then did—the very memory is refreshing.

There followed many pleasant days—days of convalescence, when it was a pleasure to recline in the large easy chair, which had been wheeled for me into the bow window of the dining-room, and there to sit dreamily, looking out into the garden with the jessamine fragrance blowing in upon me, and the refreshment of green leaves everywhere. It was summer still, but the great heat had spent itself, and the soft cool breeze played freely among the vine-leaves that clustered round the window. The very choicest



fruits from the orchard, the tenderest chickens from the farm, all dainty things to tempt the appetite which was gaining strength every day, were mine. In my life I had never been so tenderly cared for before.

It was a quiet house in those days. I wondered at it at first; wondered at the absence of childish footsteps and laughter and shouting; wondered that there was no slamming of doors, no rude calling, no sounds of quarrelling nor crying. And then I learnt that mamma and the children were all sent off to the sea-side, when I was first taken ill, that they were there still, and likely to remain till I was well enough to take their place.

"So you see, Miss Bessie, you will have to make haste and get well, for I shall not be able to spare Jenny much longer," said Ernest Merton playfully, one afternoon, when he came in to see me. "I have been very good to spare her so long. Your illness broke up all our plans, my young lady!"

"I am very sorry," I faltered, turning very red. "Yes, you are very good, and so is she—so *very* kind."

"I know that, and therefore I have been very self-denying. I'll spare her a little longer, if you will promise to get well quickly."

"Don't mind him, Bessie, darling," interposed Jenny, folding me in her arms, for I was weak yet, and the silly tears would come.

"But he is right, Jenny, dear," I answered lowly, shaking off the tears. "He has been good to spare you, and you mustn't mind me a bit. I am getting well now, you know; you needn't wait."



"Ah, it will do him good to wait," laughed Jenny. "There is plenty of time, so don't let it worry you, darling. We have to be thankful that you are getting well so nicely, after all this long illness."

"I might have died, Sidney," I whispered to my brother one quiet evening, when we were left together. Papa was away at the seaside too; he had gone to see how the rest of his family were progressing, now I was so far recovered that he could comfortably leave me; and Ernest had taken off Jenny for a ride. "Did you know that I was in danger?"

"I did indeed, dear Bessie. Those were days I do not care to think of."

"God was very good to spare me; do not you think so, Sid?"

"Yes, darling, good to me—good to us all. If ever I prayed in my life, Bessie, it was in those dreadful days, when I thought I was going to lose my little sister."

"And do you not think your prayers were heard, and answered too, dear Sid?" I asked softly, after a little pause, in which I lay with my head back on his broad shoulder, within the shelter of his strong supporting arm.

"I am afraid to say—I scarcely dare say *that*—yet it seemed like it. But I have not got so far as to hope that my poor prayers could be heard and answered."

"Yet you *did* pray?"

"Yes, I could not help myself, I had to. I could not give you up, dear, I wanted you so much. All that we had talked of—all that we were seeking—

came before me. I could not do without you ; and the doctor gave no hope, or very little. I was obliged to pray, if that indeed was prayer. I am half afraid of it, now I think of the way in which it was done."

"God could not be angry, Sid, you were so much in earnest," I answered, shaking the hand I held. "And we *are* spared to each other, and we do not mean to give up searching till we find the right way of asking—do we, dear?"

"No, never," said Sid, and he meant it.

## CHAPTER V.

### ONE RAY MORE.

DAY by day I grew better and stronger—a little better and a little stronger, at least—no very rapid progress, but sufficient to enable me to rise by eleven o'clock, and remain up till after ten, when it was real refreshment to go to bed again. I had our little sitting-room assigned to me, for there was a very large old easy-chair, wheeled close to the window, and a little round morsel of a table, to hold all I required, and a spring-cushioned couch, where I could lie most luxuriantly when I was tired of sitting. There were plenty of books here, too—shelves of books over one wall—for we had no library ; and though there were books in every room of the house, they were mostly kept here.

The room had another charm to me—its large, bow window—not like the dining-room, however—for the window here opened in the French fashion, like doors, on to the prettiest part of the garden—a

sloping lawn, flanked by beds of flowers at this season of the year. Chrysanthemums in endless beauty, and gorgeous verbenas were rife. Some of the bushes were like wreaths of snow, and were a splendid contrast to the green velvety lawn. Bulbs there were, but few had at present put forth an appearance; but the mignonette, which clustered thickly here and there, made the air very sweet. A row of poplars bounded the view, and shut in this little snuggerly on one side—monthly rose-bushes, mingled with furze, grew on the other. Beyond all was a glorious peep of the hilly range, steep and blue in the distance. It was a pleasant little room for an invalid to get well in, and I think it certainly helped in the progress.

But nearly opposite to me hung that picture of the three Apostles, of which I have before spoken, my own mother's heirloom—papa valued it for that—and we all liked it for its curious carved oaken frame. Those sweet eyes of St. John were always looking at me now, and made me think of some new words of his I had lately read—"God is *love*."

Those words set me pondering, and when I looked abroad at His beautiful works, how could I help believing that He was so?

As I grew strong I was, of necessity, left very much alone. My nurses needed recruiting after all their weary nights of watching. Mary was sent away for a holiday to her friends, and a woman engaged for a short time in her place, and Ernest carried Jenny off at every opportunity, and I was glad for her to go. She wanted taking care of after all her care for me, and she got it.



And I, of necessity, was, as I said, very much alone, for Sidney, though he would have liked to keep me company, was under the necessity of being away, as papa was absent from home. The days sometimes seemed very long, especially as for a time I could not amuse myself with work, and was too weak to read much. When I could read, time went rather more quickly, and I was less weary.

In those days the little old book, with its small print and red-edged leaves, was a close companion; for I was very much in earnest, groping after the light, eager and thirsting after more knowledge, and with the cry of the Ethiopian to Philip on my lips—"How can I understand unless some one guide me?" I needed another Philip to come to me, preaching *Jesus*. But, lacking a teacher, I went on in my own blind way—a *blind* way, but a right way after all, for the promise is, "They who seek shall find;" and God's promises never fail.

Sidney was sitting with me one evening a little later on. I sat up longer in the evening then, for I was much better, and less inclined for bed. It was rather chilly, and the windows were closed and the curtains drawn, and the light of the large lamp with its frosted globe was pleasant. A bright little morsel of fire shone and sparkled on the hearth to remove the chill, which I felt more, I suppose, because of my recent illness. The large chair was wheeled before the fire, and I reclined luxuriously in it, with my feet on a footstool and my hands in my lap, for I was tired of reading and walking, and ready for nothing so much as a quiet talk with my brother.



He was tired, too. He had had a long day, over-seeing his men about the station, walking and riding here and there, and was getting rather anxious for papa to come home. "There were some things that were going wrong," he said, "and it was clear enough the master was wanted."

"I should think that papa will soon be home," I returned presently; "indeed, it is getting rather late for the seaside. They will surely *all* return together?"

"Well, I don't know that," said Sidney, smiling. "Mamma is afraid of infection, and, notwithstanding the doctor's protest, will insist upon a thorough fumigation first. I should like to take you off somewhere, however, before these active measures come into practice; and I have an idea of a little snuggery among the hills that would be the very thing for you."

"And will papa and mamma like it?"

"Why, of course they will; it is the very best thing that can be done. Here the house can undergo a thorough fumigation; Jenny's marriage can come off; and you will be fairly out of all the worry and bustle, which would be sure to throw you back."

Yes; the idea of worry or bustle was by no means a pleasant thought to me. I was not yet strong enough to bear much excitement, and if I could be spirited away to this little snuggery of Sidney's, why, it would be very pleasant to get well quietly there, especially if Sidney could be there, too; and presently I asked him if that was included in the programme.

"Yes, little sister," he said, smiling; "I can be

with you a good deal of the time, at any rate: I dare say as much as you will want me. But we can decide nothing till father comes back. And you have not taken your first walk in the garden yet. You might try that to-morrow."

"Yes," I answered, wondering whether I really could walk; it seemed so long since I had been out in the fresh air. The apricots were hanging in golden clusters on the branches when I was first taken ill, and now even the peaches were gone.

We sat quite quiet for a time, looking into the fire. The old sad feeling was coming over me again, and I read the same expression in his face.

"Bessie," he said at length, breaking the silence with a rather desperate effort, "it does not seem to me that we are either of us making much progress. I don't mean to blame you, dear," he added, instantly noting the tears that rose unwittingly to my eyes. "You have had enough to occupy your thoughts with your illness; you have, in fact, been too ill to think at all."

"Only part of the time, Sid. I cannot tell you all I have thought, or all I have hoped, since my illness," I answered sadly. "Those words, 'What is man that Thou art *mindful* of him?' that came into my mind when I was first taken ill, gave me a good deal of hope at the time."

"Yes, and you remembered them even amidst your delirium; they were some of the first words you spoke to me."

"Were they? I do not remember. I know it seemed so grand that the high and mighty God

should take thought or care for us; and yet that word *mindful* must mean this. Then the other day I came across some words of John's in his epistle," and I glanced up affectionately at the picture in the old carved frame, "'God is love.' Sid, if it is so, why should we be afraid to come to Him?"

"Only that the feeling of His greatness and His majesty keeps one at a distance—makes one unable to realize so much that He is a God of love."

"And yet," I answered musingly, as my eye fell on a dainty little saucer of violets on a side-table near me, the sweet perfume of which filled the room, "I have somewhere read that this God, so great, so mighty, that the huge rocks are the works of His hands, the moon and stars, the magnificent sea, made also these sweet little violets. Does not this seem to bring the two characters together—power and majesty, goodness and love?"

The door opened, and Ernest and Jenny came in, flushed and radiant from their ride. Our talk was over for that night, but we had each something to think over. I saw that Sid had caught the idea by the gleam of his eyes, though he said nothing. The look was language enough for me.

Only a little ray of light! Well, anything better than the darkness.

And we had not lost an evening, even though for a time the train of thought was snapped asunder. It wanted but the prism of God's Word to divide that one little ray into colours of matchless beauty. At present it was but the little colourless ray, but we treasured it as such.



Jenny was all excitement and blushes, and Ernest's spirits were almost too much for me. They were not unkind, but I believe, seeing me sitting there, they almost forgot how much of an invalid I was still, and how little affected my nerves even then. Jenny had heard from mamma, and they were coming home in a fortnight. The house was to be thoroughly cleaned and purified, and then preparations made for the wedding; and as these, in fact, had been quietly going on for some time, there was not much to be done.

"We have been inspecting our new home," said Ernest gaily to Sidney. "We had Louie and George with us, so we were a merry party, were we not, Jenny?"

"I rather think we were!" said Jenny significantly; "but, Bessie, darling, whatever shall we do with you in all this cleaning and turning out?" she added, turning to me in sudden recollection. "Poor child! you are quite pale now. Ern, we are too noisy for her."

"Oh! don't mind me; I shall do well enough; besides, Sid has a plan of his own for taking me out of it; and I think, perhaps, it will be better."

"Oh! but I shall want you at the wedding, Bessie, dear; you must be my bridesmaid. I could not possibly do without you."

"Then you will have to put off your marriage again, Jenny," said Sidney with a smile.

"Presuming that *I* have a voice in the matter," said Ernest, with a comical grimace, "*I* say no more putting off, thank you; I am patient enough generally, but patience has its bounds."

"And, Jenny, dear," I reasoned, "I should only be



very much in the way, and no credit to the bridal party either." And I held up my arm, so round and pretty once, so thin and wasted then. "Now Maude and Lilly will make such pretty little bridesmaids," I continued coaxingly, "and mamma will be pleased; and after all we shall not be very far apart."

"You see, Jenny, we are all against you," laughed Sid. "This poor little thing looks quite faint and weary with sitting up and discussing the matter already. Why, the excitement would bring a relapse, and that cannot be afforded at any price."

And Mary, coming in at the moment (for she had returned recruited and happy from the visit to her friends), took me at once off to my room and got me comfortably to bed, bringing a nice little supper, hot and savoury, to restore some of the colour to my cheeks, and then drawing aside the window blind that I might see the stars and the soft moonlight before I went to sleep, and the early sunlight on the hills when I awoke. She wished me a good-night in her own hearty fashion, and left me.

Sleep soon stole over me, and my last waking thought, I can even now remember, was of Him who formed those golden worlds, and yet moulded the little violets.

## CHAPTER VI.

### LIGHT IN THE DWELLING.

"That they which enter in may see the light."—LUKE viii. 16.

A WEE bit of a house—four small rooms and a lean-to—built up among the rocks, with broken pieces of the rocks themselves welded together by not un-

skilful hands, though with rough tools and rough cement. Two or three chimneys of the customary excrescent appearance, looking like huge after-growths without, but exceedingly comforting within, gave breadth to the house; tolerably-sized windows, prettily curtained; and a porch at the door, covered with Cape ivy, made up the sum total of Sidney's little snuggerly, to which he managed—not without a few difficulties to contend with—at last to spirit me away.

I scarcely knew what to make of it at first. I had never been in such a romantic place before—it was literally among the rocks. Huge boulders cropped out on every hand, great masses and small, all jumbled and thrown together as though an earthquake had been at work scattering and shattering with its internal forces. There were no trees—at least, none near the house. Further down, near the creek that ran below, there were great patches of verdure, tea-tree bushes, and young gums and pines, besides many wild shrubs and flowers. No trees near the house—but they were not needed for shelter; the great rocks that rose on every hand were shelter enough. Here and there, indeed, in quaint nooks, little spots of greenness were visible, and the scarlet creeper threw its graceful drapery and brilliant blossoms over some rough old boulder; but the Cape ivy at the porch was nourished by earth brought up from the creek; the bare rock would never have afforded it a foothold.

A little snuggerly! Well, it was that; and I learnt to love it, and those within it, too, before I left it.

But I did wonder where I was coming to when I first caught sight of it in the grey of evening, just as the blue shadows were settling over the rocks, deepening in the crevices, and lingering about the heights. I was tired, too, with my journey, slowly as we had come, and in the very easiest of our buggies. Sidney had been very careful of me. It was only a fourteen miles' ride after all, and we had made a long rest half-way; but my strength was very meagre, and I did not tell my kind brother how very fatigued I really was, though I think he judged so by my silence, and then by the change in my voice, when at length he exclaimed,—

“We are just home now, Bessie!”

Home! Well, that sounded pleasant; but where was the very first sign of it? I saw the waters of the creek tumbling and whirling over a rocky bottom; and rocks, rocks, everywhere. But the house—where was that?

“They are expecting us; I will let them know that we are here,” said he, uttering a shrill “Coo-ee” as he spoke. As he did so he pointed upwards, and there, just in front of an overhanging mass, I saw the gleaming, cheerful lights from the windows, and at the same moment a door was thrown widely open, and a great flood of light poured out its welcome upon us, as an answering voice came down to salute us.

“How ever should we get up there with the buggy?”

“We are not going to try, little Sis,” said Sidney cheerfully. “Our friends keep their stables below,



as you will see ; and we shall find a path up to the house far less difficult than any you can see here."

And so it was. By quite an easy ascent we came up to the back of the house. We walked slowly together, having left the buggy and horse to be cared for by a man, who stood waiting at some large gates to take them. Half-way up we were met by our host, Mr. Foster, a tall, stout, broad-shouldered man, with a frank, free, open face, and a voice that bore a welcome in itself. I liked him from the first for the kindness of that welcome ; I learnt to like him afterwards for a higher and better reason.

But it was to the fair, comely, motherly woman who took me in her arms at once as I came to the door, and bore me into a veritable little chamber of peace, that my whole heart went out. She has long since gone to her heavenly home, but I fancy I can see her now, as she took off my hat and unfolded my wraps, and then with a loving smile told me, "that with God's blessing she would soon have me well again." "God's blessing!" just what we needed for everything, Sid and I.

I was very tired, and cold too, and I dare say I looked so, for in the large, clean kitchen—the largest room in the house, by-the-bye—they had brought an old, comfortable, rest-inspiring easy-chair into the coziest corner of the huge hearth ; a great hassock placed for my feet ; and as Sidney put me in it, smiling as he did so, I felt I could scarcely help being rested there. That kitchen was such a bright, clean place ; there was never any dirty work done there. The furniture was of the simplest character—wooden



chairs and tables of plain deal, but white as snow, a dresser of shelves full of glittering plates and dishes, and bright covers, shining in the firelight, embellished the walls. Before the fire stretched a very large and heavy rug, thick and warm to the feet, and a strip of matting reached from that to my bedroom, that my feet might not come in contact with the cold stone floor. A little clock ticked cheerfully from the chimney-piece; the window-ledge was full of books, one great book in a well-used green baize cover conspicuous among them. But the great charm to me that night was the huge hearth and its burning logs, diffusing such a genial glow through the room that my face soon glowed in unison.

What an appetite the ride had given me, and the air of the hills and rocks! Had I ever before tasted such chicken? Could anything be better than those scones, and the fragrant tea, with its delicious cream? Had I ever drunk so appreciatingly before? It seemed to me I never had; and Sidney, looking at me, thought he had done the right thing in bringing me there.

But the masterpiece of all was to come; for when the neat-handed maiden, in her short, dark print dress and white apron, had carried away the last of the supper dishes, she came back into the room, and, placing the large green baize book before her master, retreated modestly to a chair at the side.

James Foster opened the great book before him, slowly, reverently. He made no excuses, asked no forbearance on our part. It was one of the customs of the house—as much so as the breakfast on the

table in the morning, as the supper spread for our repast at night. He had not a suspicion that an excuse was needed, and I respected him for it.

I shall never forget that reading, or the way the rich old Bible words rolled out, as though every word was loved and believed in. I do not know whether I had ever noticed that twenty-seventh Psalm before; certainly I had never thought it so full of beauty, so expressive of what I needed. Those two last verses! The tears came into my eyes as I heard them; and Sidney's hand, that was holding one of mine, gave it a little squeeze of sympathy.

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord."

We knelt down—Sid and I—as the rest knelt. Our whole hearts, I veritably believed, bowed down within us.

It was a simple prayer that followed, from no lettered lips; but what a prayer it was! *We* had never heard anything like it. It was the reverent kneeling of a subject before a loving Sovereign, the talk of a child to a loving Father. No distrust, no hesitation, no doubt: "Thou hast said, and therefore we take Thee at Thy Word, dear Lord"—that was its burden. How wonderful it seemed!

And how *we* were blended into that petition now; the light that we were craving for was asked for us. It seemed as if those requests must be answered, and a great peace fell upon me.

I did not sleep directly ; it was not my custom. I lay resting, half-buried in the soft, thick goose-down bed, pure and fragrant with lavender. The tiny little window, with its lifted curtains, showed me a bit of clear sky—and one fair star—between the rocky boulders that fell apart just before the casement, opening on to what I discovered in the morning to be a lovely reach of scenery. I thought, as I looked at that star, of the star in the East that had lighted the way to Jesus ; and I went to sleep at last, dreaming that I had found Him—the “*light*”—the “*life* !”

Ah ! God had truly guided us thither, though we knew it not. Sidney had thought only of my health, and a quiet haven where I could get well. He had, indeed, a vague idea that in the quiet and the solitude there might be more possibility of seeking for what we so much desired. But he did not know that the light we were groping after was in that little dwelling among the rocks—that true peace, the peace in believing, was with its inmates. All unwittingly he had brought me, knowing not to what a safe haven we had come.

We had many points in sympathy, Sid and I ; but he was a man, and had stronger thoughts and stronger prejudices, and stronger doubts to contend with. So, while I slept, he sat at his little “lean-to” window, looking down—down into the valley and the foaming creek, flooded with moonlight—and pondered over all he had heard, till past midnight. “*Wait on the Lord*”—those words that seemed to give me rest, awoke all the impatience and restlessness of his



nature. He felt that he could not wait, that he could grope no longer in the darkness ; he wanted to know then ; with the unreasoning longing of an invalid for morning, so he agonized for clearer light.

He went to sleep at last, tired out with his mental struggle. But at the same time just a shadow of hope was deep down in his heart. It bade him "Be of good courage."

## CHAPTER VII

### LIGHT IN THE LIFE.

"The path of the just is as a shining light."—PROV. iv. 18.

A **SPLENDID** morning, bright and glorious with sunlight. It sparkled among the waters of the creek which ran joyously in their narrow bed, laving the water-cress and herbage on their banks, and dashing the drooping boughs of two or three willows on the margin with glittering spray. It glinted in and out the rocks, and came with delightful warmth upon me as I stood at the door of my rocky home, rejoicing in the beauty around me. June sunshine is so welcome, coming in the midst of cold and cloud and rain, verifying the poet's words that "behind the cloud the sun was shining," and chiding our lack of faith, our gloom, our distrust.

I had been a week in the "Nest" (for so the Fosters had named their rocky home), and was gaining health and strength daily, and yet it had been a week of storm such as I had never before experienced. It began the evening of the day after our arrival—a sudden breaking up of clouds ; a whispering and



moaning of the wind among the rocks, sweeping occasionally round the house with a wild, weird shriek, and shaking the windows as it passed; then across the range of hills in front of the house the lightning began its fitful play, followed by low mutterings of thunder, till at last down came the rain in such torrents that I had serious doubts whether our little "Nest" would not be carried bodily with it, and swept in triumph down the stream.

In the midst of the storm I well remember with what unction the grand old words of the Bible rolled out from Mr. Foster's mouth.

"A refuge from the storm—a covert from the heat." How he lived out his belief! How he took *hold* upon the promises! "Thou hast said," he said, "and we believe Thee." What would I not have given for such faith as that?

"I mean to ask him some day how he got that strong faith." I thought that we were too great strangers yet, so I resolved to wait.

What a night that was! I lay shaking in my bed. Sidney did not go to bed at all, and two or three times in the night he came to sit with me, knowing I was afraid.

It was not much wonder—the lightning was terrible!—rose and blue and flame-colour—forked and jagged! And the crashes of thunder went pealing from rock to rock, and echoing again and again from hill to hill. One terrific shock shook the whole house, and then we heard the noise of a mighty fall.

In the morning we found a great piece of rock,

some fifty yards from the house, had been torn up from the spot where, for many a year, it had weathered the storms, and had been flung into the foaming creek below. I heard them talking about it as I lay taking my breakfast in bed! Heard, too, Mr. Foster repeat the last words of last night's reading, "God is a refuge for us." How grand those words seemed, and how good was God to us!

The violence of the storm had spent itself with that night's raging, but still for two or three days the lightning played about the hills, and low mutterings of thunder reverberated in the distance, dying gradually off into silence. But the rain came steadily down, and the clouds were leaden-hued. It was very cold, too; and I had a splendid fire made in my room, from which I was not permitted to venture.

"We shall have some fine weather after this, I think," said my host heartily, "and you will be able to take short flights from the 'Nest' soon, never fear."

I was very comfortable as it was—so kindly and thoughtfully cared for by them all; and the air was fine in spite of the rain. I felt I was getting better, and should be quite ready for a short flight when the weather permitted; and so I told him.

"That's good," he answered cheerfully, "and so is God, Miss Bruce. He does all, and gives us all. We can never praise Him enough."

I wondered to myself how all these years I had lived without thinking of this—literally without God in any of my thoughts.

The rain passed away, and, as I before said, a splendid morning came at last, bright with sunshine.

It was the Sabbath, and everything seemed to me to wear a Sabbath sweetness about it. How I did enjoy standing out under the porch and looking round me, with that sunshine warming my very soul !

"You seem to enjoy the sunshine, missie," said hearty James Foster, coming up the rocky path, and bidding me a cheerful good-morning.

"Oh, yes ! such sunshine as this," I answered gladly ; "it seems to do me good."

"So it will, Miss Bruce, so it will, just as that other Sun heals the sin-sick, fainting soul—'the Sun of Righteousness, which shall arise with healing in His wings. That's what we all need, and the warm beams of that Sun, I take it, are more healing than any other."

I stood with the warm waves of sunshine passing over me—healing in their very touch—but now I longed for the healing of those other Sun-rays. How I wanted to know more about all, and yet could not muster up courage to ask.

And yet his whole being seemed basking in the glorious light ; his life seemed full of it, happily, joyously full.

There was a little chapel some distance away, hidden somewhere among the hills ; but there was the creek to cross, and it was very much swollen, and the ground was wet still, and of course they would not let me venture. By-and-by the faint tinkle of a little bell came up to us, mellowed by the distance, and Sidney went off with his host to the public service, leaving me in Mrs. Foster's care, who had kindly arranged to stop with me and let the girl go.



Of course she had to do her work, and so I put on my hat and a warm wrap, and walked up and down before the house in the sunshine. It was so pleasant out there ; the ground had dried up wonderfully, and the air was as sweet as could be. The great rocky boulders stood out so pure and clean after their washing in the rain, and the tufts of grass that grew between and around them were brilliantly green.

Up and down, up and down I walked, glad of my newly acquired power to do so—glad of my added strength—glad that the storm was over, and the sunlight come once more. The light seemed so beautiful, sparkling over everything, and the air was full of sweet sounds—the murmur and rush of the creek, the song of birds, the buzz of the bees, sipping honey from a group of early flowers near the house, the earth for which had all been brought up from the creek.

I grew tired at last of walking up and down, and sat down on the seat under the porch. I could hear Mrs. Foster walking softly about. She always walks softly, and treads lightly, though she is so stout. There is a sort of spring in her tread, as though her heart was light, for a heavy heart robs even the foot of its elasticity. I could hear her singing little snatches of hymns as she moved about in the kitchen, but I could not distinguish any words. I wished that I could, for I was sure they would be something nice.

By-and-by she went into my room, tidying and putting away and making it comfortable for me. She was still singing low and to herself, but presently



she threw open the window, and stood a moment looking out, then, as she turned away to her dusting again, she sang out clearly and distinctly, so that I heard every word. The view from the window must have inspired her :—

“Lord, give me light to do Thy work ;  
For only, Lord, from Thee  
Can come the light by which these eyes  
The way of work can see.

“Yet pleasant is the work for Thee,  
And pleasant is the way ;  
But, Lord, the world is dark, and I  
All prone to go astray.

Oh, send me light to do Thy work !  
More light, more wisdom give !  
Then shall I work Thy work indeed,  
While on Thine earth I live.

“The work is Thine, not mine, O Lord,  
It is Thy race I run ;  
Give light, and then shall all I do  
Be well and truly done.”

And here, I thought, was this true Christian praying and asking for light, when to me her whole life seemed full of light. I knew that I—that Sidney—was still in the darkness, that we needed light indeed to guide us. “Light to do Thy work !” Why, she seemed to bask in the light, to live in it all day long. I knew it by the gladness in her eyes, by the spring of her step, by the little bursts of hymn-song, by the words on her lips, for though at present she had never directly addressed me on what I knew was nearest her heart, yet there were many little sentences

uttered in my presence which I guessed were meant for me.

"Give light, and then shall all I do  
Be well and truly done."

Yes; that was just what I needed—light to see my way out of the darkness. It was such a faint little glimmering that I had, I could scarcely bear it.

I rose up presently and walked to the bedroom door.

"Mrs. Foster!" I suddenly exclaimed, lest my courage should fail, "I like those words so much, but it seems to me that you live so much in the light, that, in fact, it is I and my brother who are in darkness, who need the light."

"My dear child," she said, coming forward, and taking my hands in hers, a little pink colour coming all over her face, either with gladness or surprise,—  
"my dear child, we can never have too much of a good thing. Do you not know that? And light is *very* good; it clears away all difficulties. A little light makes us crave for more. Do not you think so?"

"Yes," I said; for I remembered how, in my illness, I used to lie awake watching for the morning, and when the first streaks of light appeared, longing so intensely for its increase.

"And do you not know," she lovingly continued, drawing me into the large chair by the glowing fire she had kindled, and gently removing my hat and shawl, "that there must be some light to make you find out the darkness?"

"Yes," I answered slowly; "some light, but a very little will do that."

"Do you know who has said, 'I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness'?"

"No! Where shall I find those words, Mrs. Foster?" I answered eagerly.

"They are Christ's own words, my dear; and very precious words they are," she replied, taking my little Bible from me, and turning to the 12th chapter of John, 46th verse. "We have only to come to Him, to trust in Him, and all our dark clouds will disappear; for He is light."

She went off then, leaving me to think over the words; and I sat, leaning back in my great chair, the Bible in my lap, and my eyes looking into the fire, and my heart burning within me.

Yes! it was clear enough, I thought, what must be done. It was to come to Christ for *all*. And so I said, when presently she came back with a little basin of delicious soup, and wheeled a small table to my side, and stood for a moment watching me.

"Yes; that's it. *All* is in Christ. You must come to Him who is the *Light for light*, my dear child. And none that ever come to Him go away disappointed. And, I think," she added, imprinting a motherly kiss upon my forehead, as she went off again, "I think you *are* coming."

Was I? and a little glad thrill ran through my veins. "Into the light—into the light, Lord; send even me," I prayed, with eyes so blinded by hopeful tears, that I could scarcely find my spoon or the little basin that invited my attention.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## LIGHT FROM THE CROSS.

"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—2 COR. iv. 6.

SIDNEY came in from chapel looking very bright and fresh. He brought the sweet air in with him, and a perfume of wet grass, but he laid a tiny sprig of half-opened wattle-blossom on the book in my lap. It was like a promise of a future spring—the dear little golden balls!

"I met with an old schoolmate this morning, Bessie," he said presently, "one of the old St. Peter's College boys. You have heard me speak of Kent Templeton, have you not? I little expected to see him at chapel, to-day; indeed, I did not know he was living anywhere near—

"The Templetons of Glen Linn?" I asked.

"Yes. Why? do you know anything of them?"

"Not much, Sid! I heard Ernest saying something about them to Jenny one day. They are very rich, are they not?"

"Yes, but you would not think so, for there is nothing arrogant in their manners, and they are perfectly simple in their dress."

"I like them the better for that. Then you saw more than one of the family?"

"Yes. I was introduced to the old gentleman—a fine, frank old fellow he is, too—and to Miss Templeton. She played the harmonium at the chapel. She is a very pretty girl, and so easy and graceful, I am sure you would like her."

"Umph!" It was a little note of distaste, fortunately uttered half under my breath—a little touch of jealous feeling made me think that I did not want to like her.

"I thought the Templetons were church people," I presently said, by way of breaking the pause.

"I thought so too, but it seems they are not; at any rate there is no church near, and Mr. Foster tells me Mr. Templeton, sen., throws all his influence and no mean amount of pecuniary help into the little chapel among the hills. It is a very pretty chapel—will seat about two hundred comfortably. It is built on a part of the Glen Linn estate, and with a great slice of the Glen Linn money. The harmonium was a presentation, too, from Mrs. Templeton. She has a private income of her own, I am told; and Nina, the eldest daughter, gives her services to conduct the singing."

"And Kent Templeton, your old schoolfellow—does he do nothing?"

"Ah, that was what surprised me more than all!" returned Sidney, suddenly becoming grave and leaning forward in his chair, with his elbows on his knees, and his face resting in his hands. "I left him at college a light-hearted, rather random youth of seventeen, up to the usual amount of school pranks, though as goodnatured a fellow as ever lived; but as to any signs of what he now is, I should have thought him one of the most unlikely."

"What is he now?"

"He is a *Christian*, Bessie; and, as Mr. Foster tells me, he is serving his Master with all the talents

he has ; imitating Him, he is going about doing good. It *was* a surprise to me, Bessie, you may think, when I recognized in the preacher of the morning my old harum-scarum schoolmate."

"Oh, Sidney ! I am so glad. You must indeed have been surprised ! And did he recognize you ?"

"Yes, at once. I saw he did by the slight colour that rose in his face. But after that first glance he did not look towards the corner in which I sat, and my presence did not appear to make any difference to him—or I suppose he forgot me—in his subject. I waited for him afterwards, and I thought he would never have done shaking my hand ; and then he introduced me to his father and sister. They wanted me to go home with them at once, but I told them I had a little sister among the rocks who needed to be taken care of ; and then Kent said he should bring his sister to see you in a day or two. You need not mind, they are just as free and pleasant as can be."

I did not say that I should mind, only I suppose I looked a little scared ; but the entrance of Mrs. Foster with a summons to dinner prevented any more words on the subject.

We heard the little bell tinkling again after dinner—it was for Sunday-school, the Fosters told us, and presently Mrs. Foster and the maid put on their things and went, for Mrs. Foster had the principal Bible-class, and the maid was a member of it. So Sid and I and Mr. Foster were left to the enjoyment of the splendid fire of glowing shea-oak logs in the clean, neat kitchen, each with books in



our hands, but all of us more disposed to talk than to read.

"That young Templeton is a fine preacher," said Foster, after a pause. "He's young, but he is earnest, and feels what he says, right down in his heart. Hey! it's a noble theme—the cross of Christ; and a man can never exhaust it."

"Was that Mr. Templeton's subject this morning?" I asked, for my brother did not speak.

"Yes, Miss Bruce, it was, and one he loves to dwell upon, as well as we to hear. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Those were the words;" and he handed me a small Bible, with a page turned down at Galatians, 6th chapter and 14th verse. "Ah! *that* is where the glory rests. They nailed Christ to the cross, meaning to degrade, to humiliate Him. They saw not the halo of glory that encircled that dear dying head, they knew not how the light of that cross would shine into the future—a something indeed to glory in!"

"The Roman Catholics think and talk much of the cross," I ventured softly, half-scared by my own boldness.

"Ah! the *material* cross; but when *we* speak of the cross, we think of its results," said Mr. Foster firmly. "It is *the* Christ upon the cross, and why He was there, as I once heard a man say. That is the *glory* of the thing. 'He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;' and then follows the *light* of the whole, my dear young lady—'*and with His stripes we are healed!*'"

Yes, I seemed to stand in the light of the cross now as I had never stood before. The light and the glory of it all were revealing themselves even to me. How beautiful seemed those words, "with His stripes we are healed!" I could only think it, I could not answer; but sat with my back half-turned upon the others, my eyes full of glad tears, looking into the glowing cavernous depths of the fire.

"Yes," he continued, with a glad, full voice, after a moment's pause, "it is not so much the cross, but the work done there. Christ died—for what? Why, to preserve the everlasting life of those who believe in Him; He died to ransom them; He gave His life for theirs. Light may well pour forth from that cross! Light! life—immortal life! All are centred there. 'Herein is love; not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and died for our sins.'"

We sat in deep silence after that for a long time. Nothing but the ticking of the clock, or the glow of the flame, or the soft falling apart of the burning ashes, or the quiet rustling of the leaves of the books, was audible. I was not reading, I question whether Sidney was, but the leaves were turned over occasionally, as if to support the supposition.

After a time Mr. Foster got up and went out. I heard him pacing up and down the verandah in front of the house, and knew by the faint smell of tobacco that he was smoking. Sidney came presently and sat down by my side, and, closing his book, put his arm round me.

"Little sister," he said gently, "have this man's words made you gloomy?"

"Gloomy! Oh, no, Sid; they are bright, glad words. I cannot tell you how full of light they seem to me!" I exclaimed, lifting my face to his, wet with joyous tears. It seems so clear now that we *must* take our sins to Jesus, since He died to save us from their power. Don't *you* see it, Sid, dear. There can be *no* other way."

"I see that *you* are coming rapidly into the light, pet, but you are leaving me behind in the darkness. 'According unto your faith be it unto you.' That must be it. Man's *reason* ever has, and ever will, come in the way of belief. It's not an easy thing to come like a little child and take in all this unquestioningly on trust."

"And yet this has to be done, Sid."

"Yes, I believe that. But it seems to me that I must work it all out. I've found out this much, that I am a sinner. I own to that, but I haven't come to understand how Jesus dying on the cross can rid me of those sins. It seems to me I must do something *myself*, don't you see? and I don't make any headway. There's no light yet!"

"And I know so little," I mournfully answered, "and yet, dear Sid, I seem to see just *this* much out of the darkness, that all the light there is, or ever will be, must come from the cross."

"Simply to Thy cross I cling!" Ah! it's very beautiful—the very thing for you, little Sis, with your trusting nature. I haven't got hold of it yet. I wish I had—I wish I could stand in the same light that I see you now stand in; but I can't yet," and he rose up to his full height, stretched out both arms



wearily, and then, saying he must have a cigar, went out into the open air.

I was left alone then—quite alone—alone with the ticking of the clock and the purring of the cat, and my own thoughts ; glad still they were, with a strange, a new sort of gladness, and yet with a wistful sorrow in them, too, that Sid could not share the gladness. Here was I, out of the darkness and into the clear light of the cross ; why should not he come there, too ? Perhaps not in the same way ; we had many feelings in common, he and I, but he was a man and needed different teaching, and somehow or other I had the assurance that he would have that teaching, whatever it was, and would finally emerge into the perfect light of day.

And then, with my heart overflowing with gladness, I bowed down my head on the great arm of the chair, and thanked God for His unspeakable gift—the gift of His dear Son, and for the healing that His stripes had brought, and for the *light* from His cross.

“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling,”

was the whole burden of my cry ; and then I prayed for more light, that I might clearly see my way—that I might help my brother in his darkness ; that together we might tread the upward pathway, loving and trusting the same Saviour, and glorying together in the “Light of the Cross.”

I fell asleep, leaning forward on the great arm of the chair, and so Mrs. Foster found me when she came in. The cheerful rattling of the teacups and

spoons on the table roused me up at last, and I raised my head, to find tea nearly ready. From the little back kitchen I heard Mrs. Foster's cheerful voice ; it had a new burden, and a very sweet one, chiming in delightfully with my thoughts :—

“I left it all with Jesus,  
Long ago, long ago.  
All my sins I brought Him,  
And my woe.  
When by faith I saw Him  
On the tree,  
Heard His still, small whisper,  
‘ ’Tis for thee,’  
From my heart the burden  
Roll'd away ; happy day !”

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LIGHT OF THE WORD.

“The entrance of Thy word gives light.”—PSALM cxxx. 50.

THE bright sunny days had no long continuance. The clouds soon gathered again ; and though I was already so much stronger that a little exercise in the clear, bracing air would have been delightful, I was held a close prisoner by the rain which came steadily down, swelling the creek, and clothing the hills with a vivid luxuriant growth of verdure.

In the midst of it all came letters from home. The house had been thoroughly cleaned and garnished. Jenny wrote—“I should certainly not be able to recognize my own little room, for by dear father's orders it had been prettily papered and entirely re-

furnished, and now mamma and all the children had returned, with a governess who would no doubt prove quite equal to the charge ; and when I came home I should be able to do nearly as I liked." This was pleasant to hear, and as Jenny would soon be away it was well that all was arranged beforehand. That matter came next from her pen. "The day is fixed, dear Bessie, for the last Thursday in this month—just a week from to-day," she wrote. "Now, do not you think, my dear girl, you can manage to be well enough to come home *just for the day*, if you go back again directly ? I declare it won't seem half nice without you. You really must make an effort. We shall be married in the drawing-room, and I'm sure there need not be any fuss or excitement. Ernest and I are determined to behave in the most matter-of-fact manner, and he says we shall want *you* to do the sentimental. But if you really are not strong enough, never mind. Sidney must come without you."

I certainly was *not* strong enough, for the very reading of the letter made my heart beat sadly, and sent such a flush to my cheek that Sidney was quite concerned. But I could not have gone in any case, for, as I said, the clouds returned, and a steady, settled downfall set in up to the very day, when they suddenly rolled themselves away, leaving a clear blue sky behind them ; and the bride had the sunshine after all.

Sidney went, of course, and I was left alone with my kind host and hostess, a prisoner to the house, for the roads were impassable, and the air was damp, and I had taken already a little cold, which wanted



careful nursing, or formed an excuse for it, which was perhaps the most likely, for Mrs. Foster lavished no end of attentions on me, and petted me up as no one but Sidney had ever petted me before in my life.

It was raining slowly, but steadily, and as if there was little chance of any uplifting of the clouds when Sidney left me. He cared little for rain. With his waterproof coat and leggings, well booted and spurred, I believe he rather liked it. I was sorry, and yet I was glad for him to go, for it must have been a little dull for him to be so much with an invalid, however greatly he loved her; and men have fewer indoor resources than women unless they are students, and even then they need a little out-of-door influence to bear on their studies and relieve their tedium. Besides, just then Jenny needed him more than I did. It would have been a great disappointment if we had both been absent, but especially Sidney; and though he declared he hated weddings, there was no tangible excuse left for his absence; and I scarcely think he desired one.

I had plenty of leisure for my new thoughts and feelings. I woke in the morning to hear the heavy drops of rain falling drip, drop, from the eaves of the house, and the wind sighing round the corner, or shaking my window. The clouds were dark and heavy without, but the gladness welled up in my heart notwithstanding external influences. There was light within, and such a glad light that it was impossible to be gloomy.

Ah! how can men content themselves with a God

out of Christ? How can they put away from themselves the hope, the comfort, the joy, the rest that is in the name of Jesus—that name which is above every other name? He was called Jesus because of the salvation He brings—and what a salvation!

As I sat, day after day, alone—for Sidney was away much of the time on business connected with the run; part of which lay within five miles of the “Nest,” and Mrs. Foster was a busy woman and much occupied with her dairy—I learnt more and more of the preciousness of this name, saw more and more clearly the love that withheld not the life—the power of the cleansing blood—the *completeness* of the whole—a full and free salvation! It was the Word—the Word of the living God! that entered my soul, in its loveliness, in those days;—bringing light!—a light in which I seemed to bask, independently of all external—the only drawback to my joy being the knowledge that my darling brother could not share it with me. Yet I had hope for him. If I had found the entrance of the Word bringing light to me, what would it be when it broke forth in all its beauty and power in *him*?

So I waited, and quietly took the good of the light that had dispelled the darkness in my own soul, looking forward to the time when even in this matter we should be as one.

This week, wet as it was, Mr. Foster was absent from home. He had business connected with the sale of his dairy produce in Adelaide, and he had not returned when Sidney left for home. So we were a very small and quiet household indeed.

"We shall have fine weather again for a while," said Mrs. Foster, coming in after a final look round the premises before closing up for the night, about eight o'clock the evening before Jenny's wedding. "There's a bonny young moon showing itself over the edge of the hill, and the clouds are drifting away."

"Oh! I am very glad, for dear Jenny's sake; that is good news, Mrs. Foster!"

"Yes! and good news for you, too," said the kind creature cheerfully. "You will grow strong all the quicker for getting into the fresh air, though you do look bright to what you did when you came here first."

"Oh! I *am*," I replied joyfully. "It's just the difference of light and darkness, Mrs. Foster."

"I know, my child, I know. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.' 'The entrance of Thy Word gives light.' It's easy to read that you have found out this, and I am as glad as glad can be for you."

"I never knew before how full the Bible was of Jesus. There seems something fresh on every page, and it's something to grasp at—to cling to," I presently said, fondly clasping the little red-edged Bible in my hands. "I only wonder I never found it out before."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Foster, "it is a marvellous light; it breaks through the clouds often when we are least expecting, and then soon all our doubts and unbelief roll away under its influence, like those clouds are disappearing, and leaving the stars room to twinkle," she added, as she slowly drew down the blind, and with a kind kiss bade me good-night.



The sunshine streamed in at my window, and woke me early with its welcome light long before my usual hour of waking, and I lay thinking of Jenny and the new life into which she was going to enter that day ; wistfully thinking what a glad thing it would be if she had the "light upon her path" which brings with it so much peace and gladness. At present everything was bright for her. She was going to a pleasant, happy home of her own with one she loved—one who thought no one was like her. Everything seemed just as it should be, yet one thing was wanting after all—the *Light of life*—the Light that shineth to eternal day.

I was glad of the sunshine—glad that dear Jenny had so bright a bridal day, after all the rain and clouds of the few last days of her maiden life, and I went to sleep again, and dreamt that I was among them all, but, strangely enough, that Sidney's marriage was to be celebrated, and not my sister's. How rejoiced I was when the rattling of my breakfast-tray, and the kind voice of Mrs. Foster dispelled my dreams, and brought me back to reality!

She brought me something else in with my tray—the loveliest bunch of blue and white violets, mingled with a spray or two of mignonette. I exclaimed with pleasure when I saw them,—

"Oh, Mrs. Foster! where did you get them? How lovely!"

"Sweet, arn't they?" she answered, smiling. "I thought they would please you. They are from the 'Glen.' Miss Templeton sent them with her love, and she will ride round to see you this afternoon."

The poor little violets ! They had lost half their value already in my eyes—why I could scarcely tell I should not have liked to have defined a reason for not wishing to see their donor, and yet it was a fact.

“What is Miss Templeton like ?” I asked of Mrs. Foster some hours after, as I stood sunning myself in the porch, looking down into the creek, whose waters literally danced in the sunbeams.

“People say she is very pretty, and I suppose she is,” said Mrs. Foster. “Dark hair and eyes, and a nice colour.”

“I don’t exactly mean her looks, Mrs. Foster.”

“Oh ! Well she is a lady-like girl, two or three years older than you are, Miss Bruce, pleasant and lively enough—perhaps a little too much, according to my way of thinking, but you will be able to judge for yourself.”

“Does she believe like her brother ?” I faltered.

“No ; she does not. She is very kind and active. When any practical work is going on, she is always ready to take a part ; and I do not know what we should do without her harmonium to lead, as we’ve got so used to good playing, that I don’t know how we should get along with bad. But she does not profess to be a follower of Christ, as the word Christian means. May be you may have a mission to help her.”

“I ? Oh, Mrs. Foster ! I know so little !”

“Eh ! but you are learning, and you have the best of all teachers ; and in the light of the Gospel all is clear !”

## CHAPTER X.

## THE LIGHT OBSCURED.

"We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness."—*Isa. lix. 9.*

AND so the beauty of the weather and the same sunshine that lighted up the wedding party at the Home Park, sending its fair bride brilliantly on her tour, with the promise of a few glad, genial days,—a gleam of the coming spring before its advent,—brought also a visitor to the "Nest" and the invalid.

It was useless to rebel against it. It was ungracious to do so. Perhaps my long illness had made me nervous with strangers; perhaps my new feelings had rendered me sensitive. I was half ashamed that any indication of repulsion should be felt on my part in return for advances so evidently friendly, and I resolved that at least they should not become apparent to my visitor. I had been looking out all the afternoon along the rocky path, across the bridge of logs that was thrown over the creek, and up the winding road which I had been told led to Glen Linn, but no glimpse of a riding-skirt came through the sunshine or the shadow; and I turned at last from the window, where for a long time I had been idly sitting, to put the finishing stitches to a set of toilet mats I was making for Jenny's new home. This toilet set, a handsome embroidered sofa cushion and a floral bracket, being the sum total of my bridal offerings. They were to be in the new house before the return of the bridal pair from their tour.



I was rather low-spirited as I sat over my work. Possibly, as the afternoon grew on, I was tired. I was still weak and susceptible to outward influences. I was alone, too ; no doubt more than was quite good for me, and possessed a rather morbid dread of strangers. What had become of the brightness that had won its way through all external darkness and gloom ? Was all quite right that the light was so dim ?

I was so young in the new life, that I thought I was always to bathe in the full light of the cross, to live in the light of the Word. I had yet to learn that the Christian pilgrim has changes of clime and country to contend with ; changes of temperature and season ; that here we have no certain dwelling-place. The perfect light is, as the perfect rest, above.

And so I sat, slowly passing in and out needle and thread, making tasteful bows of blue ribbon to complete my watch-pockets, with the slanting rays of the afternoon sun pouring cheerfully in, as if to remind me of the light that I was missing. But my harp was on the willows, and I could sing no song, could discern no teaching. Something was oppressing me—what, I could scarcely tell.

In the midst of it all the door was flung wide open, and there, framed by the lintels, stood a pretty, tall, slight figure, in a dark habit and jaunty little velvet cap, from which fell heavy braids of black hair, a fair, bright face, with the colour of a rose on cheeks and lips, and eyes that were beautiful in their brilliancy—just now softened, perhaps, by a gentler feeling for the little invalid in the large chair.

"There's not a creature about to introduce me, and I don't believe we need introducing, Miss Bruce," she exclaimed, with a dash of humour at the situation, as she came forward with extended hands, and, bending down, bestowed a warm kiss on my forehead. "I am Nina Templeton and you are—?"

"Bessie Bruce," I answered, with an answering smile; for certainly she had taken me by a well-directed stratagem, and the stiffness of our interview was over.

"I sent my *avant-courier* this morning," she continued, laughing. "I did not want to take you quite by surprise, though, I believe, I have done so after all. Were you not expecting me?"

"Oh, yes, certainly I was. I have been looking for you all the afternoon, but just before you came I had been busy, and had forgotten."

"All the better. I am late, I know," she added, looking at her watch. "I made another call on the way, for, of course," she continued archly, and with a slight curl of her full lip, "it would not be etiquette to make a long first visit. But setting etiquette on one side," she went on, still laughing, "which, when you know me better you will find I generally do, I did not think a long visit would be acceptable to an invalid. However, I don't find you half so much an invalid as I expected, and shall tell your brother he must not keep you cooped up in the 'Nest' much longer if he means you to get quite strong and well."

"Oh, I am getting well very fast. It is the weather that has kept me in."

"So it has. You have not had half a chance of inhaling our fine breezes, but I believe we shall have it fine again for a few days now; the barometer has gone up considerably this morning, and the air is very drying. I scarcely got a splash, as you may see by my habit. Now, I want you to do me a favour."

"A favour?"

"Yes; do not look so alarmed, it is nothing very overwhelming. If to-morrow is as fine as to-day, I shall drive round in mamma's buggy—just the thing for an invalid, a dainty thing, all cushions and springs—and shall take you home with me. The road is as level as a die, just *through* the rocks, but not *over* them, so don't look incredulous or frightened; we'll take all sorts of care of you."

"But had I not better wait till my brother comes back," I pleaded; for, in truth, I was rather nervous at the thought of the drive, though my dread of the driver had vanished into thin air.

"No, indeed! why, that's the best of it. Here you sit, cooped up among the rocks more a great deal than is good for you, while he is making himself merry, no doubt. Why, it's the very time for me to interpose, carry you off, and bring you into the neighbourhood of flowers again, for I see you love them," she added, with a significant glance at her violets disposed in a saucer at my side—the most picturesque article I could get, by-the-bye, to spread them in.

"And now I must really go. Make my respects to Mrs. Foster, for I really do respect her; perhaps I



shall see her as I go to the stables. And to-morrow, by eleven, mind ; I shall be very punctual," and with another embrace and kiss she was off.

Did I like her ?—this out-spoken, off-hand girl, with her graceful, supple figure, and dark hair and eyes, and pretty delicate colour ? Yes, and no.

Yes—for she certainly was kind in the midst of her *brusquerie*, and there was a degree of fascination about her I could scarcely account for ; it lingered in her soft abundant hair—in her eyes, now flashing with merriment, now soft with feeling—in the rose of her cheek, coming and going with every change of emotion—in her pliant, graceful figure—in the very tones of her voice.

And *no* ; for the voice, though kind, was peremptory ; the magnificent eyes flashed forth determination ; and there was something of the tyrant even in her very attentions—a something scarcely definable, of which I was afraid.

"So, you've had Miss Templeton here ?" said Mrs. Foster, coming in just as the tea was ready, and sitting down rather wearily in her seat at the table. She had been very busy all day making up butter and turning her cheeses, and had a right to be weary, and to rest.

"Yes," I answered quietly ; "did you see her ?"

"I did, my dear. She stopped at the dairy, and to'd me she was coming for you to-morrow. Do you like to go ?"

"I would rather wait for my brother, but I suppose if it is fine, and she comes for me, I ought to go."

"I think so; it will do you good to have the change, and the buggy she will bring for you is very easy. Do you not feel equal to the drive?"

"Oh, yes. I am strong enough, but I suppose I do not quite want to go. However, I presume I must."

"Ha! ha! So you have found out Miss Nina's power, have you? Just as everybody does. She is one of those who are made to rule. The young people say she turns them round her finger. But let me warn you, my dear girl, not to allow her to influence you in everything."

"I understand you, Mrs. Foster," I answered, in a low, grave voice. "No, I hope she will not even try an evil influence, or we can never be friends."

I went early to bed that night, for I was tired with the day's excitement and loneliness, and the sudden obscuration that had come over me. I could not sleep, however, but lay with my window-blind raised, according to my usual habit, looking out on the bit of sky that my small window revealed—the morsel of sky, with its moon-lighted rock and the two or three bright stars between. They were very clear and very bright, and as I looked out upon them I could not help praying, "Lighten my darkness, O Lord!"

But how had I got into the dark? How had this cloud come over me. Perhaps, like the disciples of old, who, when in the full glory of the transfiguration mount had thought to build them tabernacles, where they might abide in the glory, I too, in the joy and

the light of sins forgiven through the blood of the cross, had forgotten that here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come. I had yet to learn, like them, that from the mount I must descend into the valley, and that, whether in mountain or valley, Jesus was ever the same.

On far into the night I remained wide awake—not quietly so, however. My thoughts were too disturbed. Sometimes they were with the wedding party at home—with Jenny and her husband—wondering whither they had gone, for I had not heard the direction of their tour; then with home itself—how strange it would seem without Jenny, and should I ever be able to fill the niche in the household that she had occupied? Should I get on well with Miss Upton, the new governess? Would mamma be satisfied with what I could do in Jenny's place? It was all new and untried; the future was to be a fresh epoch in my life—easy enough, I thought, if the "Light" is upon it.

Ah! I yearned for the *light*; the darkness was painful to me. A cloud only had come over the brightness, perhaps to teach me to look up; and, suddenly, as I tossed about on my pillow, I remembered amid my tears a verse I had heard Mrs. Foster singing over and over again, perhaps because it was the only verse of the hymn that she remembered, and she liked it. It did me good; it cheered, it comforted me as I recalled it, and, after a little, soothed by its comfort, I fell asleep. How many times since have those words done me good—they are so true.



"What need of *faith*, if all were ever clear ?  
'Tis for the trial-time that this was given.  
Though clouds be thick, its Sun is just as near,  
And *faith* will find Him in the heart of heaven."

## CHAPTER XI.

### LIGHT SHINING IN DARK PLACES.

#### 2 PETER i. 19.

IF, shrinking from a fresh encounter with strangers, and distrustful both of my visit and drive, I hoped to see gathering clouds instead of bright sunshine, I was grievously disappointed, for a more lovely winter's morning scarcely ever gave brighter promise of a superb day—not a cloud on the clear, pale blue heavens—not a breeze too much. When I looked from the window of my room I could see a heavy mist rolling up and away from the hills, leaving them green and verdant, and in the sunshine looking very beautiful.

The visit was inevitable ; I saw I had better make up my mind to it ; and perhaps after all it might do me good, and be very pleasant. So I ate my breakfast contentedly, and enjoyed the view from the porch afterwards, recalling the verse of the previous evening, as I watched the mist curl up and roll away, leaving the hills in the sunbeams. For days those hills had been shrouded by mist. Had I doubted their existence because they were concealed from my view ? The sun itself had been hidden away, while the heavens were shrouded in black-

ness. Had I for a moment imagined it would never again appear? Why, then, had I permitted the thought that Jesus had left me, and that I should feel His loving presence no more?

It was nearly eleven when, glancing along the road among the hills that led to Glen Linn, I saw the approach of the buggy.

It was a pretty sight to see in the distance—the dark object and the gracefully-prancing horse, moving along, apparently without an effort, in and out the winding, tortuous road, now hidden by the trees or by a sudden turn of the hill, and now brought into full view again, the prance of the horse and light rattle of the wheels echoing among the hills, and repeated by the echo again and again. I lost sight of them after a while, and Nina Templeton was by my side before I had left off watching for her reappearance below.

“I could not bring the carriage up here,” she said, with a kiss and a laugh. “‘The mountain cannot come to Mahomet, and therefore Mahomet must go to the mountain,’ that is the only way. But you look quite strong and brave to-day.”

“Do I?” I answered. I was not feeling particularly brave at the thought of the drive, at any rate; but I did not tell her that.

“And it is lovely out of doors—so delightful,” she continued gaily. “Are you quite ready? We won’t lose a moment if you are. I do not want you to see Glen Linn under a cloud for the first time, and we must not depend too much on this lovely weather at this time of the year.”

Yet Glen Linn was in reality under a cloud, though in those days I did not know it.

It seemed strange to me to be out in the air again after my enforced imprisonment ; my feet scarcely felt my weight as, leaning on Mrs. Foster's arm, with Nina by my side, I slowly walked between the great boulders of rock down to the roadside, and close to the banks of the creek I had so often watched from my window. I had not been down there since my first arrival, and in the bright sunshine it appeared entirely new to me. There stood the buggy under two or three large gum-trees, looking quite as dainty and inviting as Nina had promised, with its elegant appointments and cushions heaped ready for my reception, and handsome carriage-rug. Great rough gates led into the farmyard and stables, where an immense collection of fowls were picking about in all directions. To the right stood the dairy, under the shadow of a great rocky projection, with its unglazed latticed windows, white and cool-looking, a long row of shining milk-pans ranged on a bench outside. It all was so pretty and inviting that I wanted to stay and look round me, but Nina hurried me off, tucked me comfortably into my place among the silken cushions, and with a good-bye to Mrs. Foster, and a gay flourish of her whip, drove gallantly off.

"Take all manner of care of her, Miss Templeton," Mr. Foster called after us ; "remember, I'm responsible for her safety to her brother."

"She shall have 'all manner of care,' don't be afraid," replied Nina, with a wave of her hand, as we



turned the corner of a big rock and left the "Nest" behind in its shadow.

Such a drive! Along the banks of the creek for some distance—quite a mile, I should think. The road was a natural one, but hard and dry—as some of the country roads are—and wound up gradually among the hills—hills clad in verdure to the very top, with young wattles growing at their base, their fresh young leaves and half-opened blossoms scenting the air through which we drove with delicious fragrance. It was winter yet, but there was spring incense in the air. We might have storms again, but bright days were in store for us, and this was surely the promise of them. It would do to remember in our dark places, I thought, when the rain and the storm and the gloom returned.

It was a new, as well as a pleasant drive to me. There were plenty of strange masses of rocks, like abbey ruins, or old, time-devastated walls—rocks thrown upon rocks as no human hand could have placed them, rocks in all manner of quaint forms; and in and out the clefts and hollows pretty grey and brown rabbits ran wild, and, scarcely startled by the motion of our carriage, they stopped and gazed at us as we passed.

I lay back among the cushions, enjoying to the full the beauty of the drive, and the easy, luxurious motion of the carriage, Nina looking at me from time to time in great satisfaction, as she read my pleasure. She was very quiet—possibly purposely so—and I was glad to take in the loveliness of air and scene, without talking. I was not, therefore, fatigued in

the slightest when a turn in the road brought us under the shadow of a magnificent willow; and the next moment we were driving through large handsome gates, over a smooth carriage-drive, bounded on each side with lovely flowering shrubs, and blossoms of every kind that could venture out in the wintry sun. We had entered fairyland, so it seemed to me, for I had never before visited such a lovely place. Beauty everywhere—green lawns, graceful trees, and murmuring fountains; and in the background the white portico and walls of a large house, with green venetian shutters, and heavy jalousies to screen from the summer sun when it came too hotly. An aviary of canaries stood on the lawn in front of the house. A peacock spread its exquisite tail as we approached, and a noble greyhound came bounding to meet us, followed by a little silky lap-dog barking its glad welcome.

“My pets are all introducing themselves,” said Nina, laughing, as the carriage stopped before the hall door; and, springing out, she gave the reins to a youth who came up at the sound of the wheels, and, putting her arm round me, she drew me up the broad steps and into the lofty hall, where, in a doorway to the right, Mrs. Templeton stood ready to receive me.

“She is as tired as possible, mamma; or, if she is not she ought to be,” said Nina, cutting short her mother’s kind words of welcome; and, drawing me into the room, she took me to the fire. Placing me in a large easy chair, all springs and silken cushions, she took off my wraps, putting my feet upon an ottoman,

and gave me the most delicate little luncheon that ever a convalescent enjoyed.

And this was Glen Linn! Comfort and luxury combined. The floor was like soft green moss. Silken damask swept from the windows—three large plate-glass windows, opening on to a balcony affording a magnificent view of the beautiful pleasure-grounds and the hills and rocks beyond; heavy pieces of furniture—a handsome sideboard, glittering with silver and crystal; a sparkling chandelier over the centre of the large dining-table—and all the hundred and one additions combining a sitting with a dining-room. My own home, pleasant as it was, was nothing to this; and yet it was home, and I loved it.

They were so kind—mother and daughter—each in a different way; for they were very dissimilar. Nina—so graceful, so refined, amidst all her buoyant spirits—seemed scarcely to be the daughter of such a mother, for Mrs. Templeton was little and stout, and decidedly unpretentious and plain, with not too much education. And yet her face was a very lovable one, her manner caressing and gentle, and something still higher had expression in her loving eyes, and rested on her brow. When I looked at her, involuntarily the words came into my remembrance “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee,” and I learnt afterwards that I had rightly interpreted the expression. The mother and one son were united in this, each quietly working for the kingdom, each striving to diffuse a light in the dark places around them: for the rest, while Mr. Templeton freely gave of his substance for the “good of the cause,” and



was never asked for a subscription in vain, while Nina busied herself in all active works connected with the church her father *patronized*, working with a will and a zest well worthy of imitation and esteem,—it was not for the love of Christ or His cause, not for the furtherance of His kingdom, or for the diffusion of His light through a world all dark and drear without it. Generous, kindly motives no doubt influenced them in much they did, but that was all.

But the cloud that lay most heavily over Glen Linn was that cast over it by the second son, Nelson—a wild young fellow, who broke his mother's heart, distressed and angered his father, bringing shame to his sister's cheek by his dissipation. Of him it might truly be said that "he wasted his substance in riotous living."

I did not know all this till afterwards. Both the sons and their father were absent during the first part of my visit to Glen Linn. Nina had suggested that it should be so, knowing that I was still weak, and the thought was a kind one. Nevertheless, Mrs. Foster's words of warning kept returning and intruding while I listened to her laughing chatter and gay words, or watched her lithe, dancing motion about the room—the motion of a bird skimming the ground, one almost looked for wings. What did my kind mentor mean with these words of hers—"Do not let her influence you in everything"—and what were the things in which I should distrust her influence?

I had yet to learn the power of the "dark places," and the beauty of the light shining through them.

## CHAPTER XII.

## CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

"Ye are all the children of the light, and of the day."

1 THESS. v. 5.

THE day passed quickly away, for there was so much to divert and amuse at Glen Linn—books of beautiful engravings and art relics to feast the eyes on within, and such a conservatory of flowers I had scarcely dreamed of—choice flowers in bloom, that would have perished without the shelter of its protecting walls, and the warmth of its flues. It was breathing another atmosphere, an atmosphere of perfume and bird-song, to enter.

I walked gaily up and down one of the avenues after lunch with Nina, and saw the deep, thick green beds of leaves bordering either hand from which my violets had been gathered. The sun was pleasant there, but we did not stay long—long enough only for Nina to gather another bouquet of the tiny blue things—for the wind was rising, and some ominous clouds were obscuring the brightness, and I shivered once or twice, at which Nina took alarm.

"This will never do," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Foster will say I am not fulfilling my promise to take all manner of 'care of you,' if I let you take cold," and she laughingly hurried me in-doors again. "I did so want you to see my violets," she added, as we once more went up the steps to the hall. "And now I shall just take you up to my room, and you shall lie down and sleep till dinner."

I did not sleep, however, for a long time, but lay looking at the *bijou* of a room into which I had been transported, sinking in the soft couch, with its dainty lace draperies upheld by a golden arrow, and looking from the lace that edged my fine lawn pillow to the silken couch, the draped Psyches, the handsome inlaid wardrobe, and the moss and rosebuds of the carpeted floor.

Wealth! wealth! wealth!—everywhere there were abundant indications of that, and Nina Templeton evidently gloried in it. Yet there was a restlessness and an unsatisfied longing in every movement of her footstep, in every expression of her dark eyes, in every tone of her voice. What was it? Was it not the immortal spirit within, craving for other sustenance than that the world can bestow? and yet she knew it not.

I fell asleep while thinking it over, and woke to find the young lady herself at my side, playfully rousing me by the application of a lovely rosebud to my nose, and announcing dinner.

Ah me! What a change had come over the beautiful sunny sky of the morning!—clouds, clouds everywhere, dark and portentous, and rain beating against the windows as though it would force an entrance! wild, passionate bursts of rain, and a moaning wind, which swept round the house and bent the shrubs almost to the ground, as it passed them.

“Fortunate, is it not, that I told Mrs. Foster I should not bring you home to-night?—for you could not go now, however much you wished,” said Nina



exultingly. "You will just have to make yourself contented, Miss Bruce, with poor Glen Linn and its inmates ; we will try to make you as comfortable as we can."

I must indeed have been ungrateful and unappreciative both, had I not shown myself contented and happy with such kindness and attention as they bestowed upon me ; first, at the dinner-table, where everything dainty had been purposely procured for an invalid's appetite ; and afterwards in the drawing-room, where we carried our oranges and walnuts, enjoying them by the magnificent glowing fire, which reflected its dancing light on the richly papered walls and draperies, and rug, which stretched its showy length before it. I was left to enjoy it by myself for a while, for Mrs. Templeton had business in another part of the house with the servants, and Nina sat playing to me soft, delicious music at the other end of the large room. So I sat thinking dreamily, soothed by the delicate touch of Nina's fingers and the soft, rippling melody ; and by the perfect rest and enjoyment of the luxurious chair and warm glow of the fire.

The soft light rising and falling, illumining dark corners, and diffusing its mild radiance here and there through the room, and bathing me in the fulness of its warmth and glow, brought with it the memory of the morning's reading from the "Sermon on the Mount :"—

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under

a bushel ; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

It was all so clear! Out of darkness into light *first*—then the light must be revealed. There was to be no hiding, no covering, no concealment. It must prove a beacon to all around—and that for no selfish motives. It was the Father who was to be glorified in the work of His own hands. Something like this came to me, as I sat there. Not in the same words, but the same in idea.

I was so eagerly groping out into the light, that my Bible readings were all directed towards one object—the seeking for that light. I had never expected to find the two opposite conditions—darkness and light—so clearly, so distinctly portrayed.

“Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”

“Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness.”

“The children of light!” How beautiful it seemed. Children of Him who is the “*true* light,” “in whom is no darkness at all.” What, then, had I, as His child, to do with darkness? Seeking after Him, would He not indeed enlighten my darkness, dispel my clouds, and bring me at last into the perfection of light, where no clouds could intervene—no mists obscure?

Yes, He would—He would; and through all the mists and clouds and darkness which *would* hang

heavily round this mundane state, I would trust for the time being, and look blissfully forward for the rest—

“Till the rising sun appears,  
Shedding radiance o’er the spheres;  
Till returning beams of light  
Chase the terrors of the night.”

I sat so quietly in my large chair, my hands gently crossed in my lap, and my eyes fixed on the glowing coals falling noiselessly apart, thinking out my glad thoughts; the mist of doubt all gone, and the rest of faith in Jesus making me very happy—so happy that I never noticed the cessation of the music or that Nina had left the piano, till she came and knelt on the soft rug at my side, looking up into my face with a half-wondering, a half-playful expression.

“Asleep, are you? No; dreaming rather?” she exclaimed caressingly. “What happy dreams they must be, by the light of those eyes of yours! My dear child, what sweet thoughts have put that happiness into your eyes? Of what have you been thinking, little one? Not of my *Lieder ohne Worte*, I fancy?”

“Not entirely,” I answered, smiling, the twilight room giving me courage, for the brightness of the firelight had softened into red heat, and we were partly in shadow. “Your music was beautiful; it soothed me; and then the soft light of this lovely room, and the calm, and the stillness, and—”

“Well, Mignon?” said Nina, her eyes asking me to continue more than her voice.

“And the thoughts that were born of them all,” I



answered, looking away from her penetrating eyes, with the glad smile still in my own. "'Children of light,' that is what I was thinking of—and it seemed so beautiful!"

"Ah," said Nina, a sudden gloom falling into her voice, for I did not turn to look at her, "it sounds very beautiful. What do you make of it?"

"Ah," said I, flushing with strange joy as fitting words came to my lips—words I must have *heard* long ago, for I did not remember to have *seen* them—"If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

"Ah," she said, rising and standing with folded arms in front of the fire; "you are beyond me, little one. Mother and Kent would understand you. I am in the darkness still."

"But darkness is not your element," I summoned up courage to say. "You are too bright to love or to choose it."

"I do not know," she answered gloomily. "There is such a thing as having no choice in the matter."

"No—not if Bible words are true. Is not choice implied in this, 'Men loved darkness rather than light—the light that came into the world?'"

"Yes," said Nina bitterly, "I know the context, 'because their deeds were evil.' That is the real fact of the case, I suppose—the light *reveals*, the darkness *covers*."

"But light purifies, cleanses, whitens. The day is so beautiful, and even the night has its moonlight and stars."

"Ah! Bessie, child, you are too much for me; I

don't understand these things. I must leave you to mother and Kent; and, by-the-bye, here *is* Kent, and—positively your brother with him,” and she sprang forward as the drawing-room door opened, admitting the gentlemen, with an unspeakable relief in both voice and countenance.

Kent Templeton, it seemed, had met my brother coming directly from the “Nest” in quest of his little sister. They had rode on together. The storm had not passed over, but it had abated considerably; yet he owned he had not contemplated taking me back with him. Indeed, I could see he needed no persuasion to remain all night himself. Nina's attractions, and Nina's music, even without the company of his college mate, were sufficiently potent.

I looked quietly on from the shadow of my velvet chair, and trembled for my brother.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WALKING IN THE LIGHT.

“Walk in the light, as He is in the light.”—1 JOHN xi. 7.

“Walk as children of light.”—EPH. v. 8.

JENNY was married, and had gone off, bright and happy, with her husband into her new life, leaving all manner of kind messages for me behind her. Everything had passed off well, so said Sidney. The day had been charming, the assembly gay; my little sisters, Maude, Lilly, and Ally, had made very pretty bridesmaids, and had been delighted with the honour; and mamma was so much better for her seaside

residence that her terrible headaches were quite gone, and she was only anxious about me. As to Gussy, he wanted me home again badly ; and father sent word that he should come and fetch me himse'f if I did not soon return, for he could not do without his little daughter. These were some of the tidings Sidney brought from home ; and I began to think that my "Nest" was already showing signs of being broken up—that I could not much longer keep away from the home in which I was so much needed.

"It will be much better for you now, Bess," said Sidney. "The children have a famous governess in Miss Upton. She appears to have any amount of strength and energy, and has them already under good control. It must be easier for you."

Easier, perhaps ; better ? not in every respect. Had I not entered on a new life ? Was not the command, "Walk as children of light," resting on me ? And should I find the way more easy out of my usual sphere ? But I said nothing of this to my brother ; indeed, I had little opportunity for conversing with him. I had to leave all my questions till we were alone again ; for, as I said, Nina and her music and fascinations were very potent that evening.

I sat quietly in the firelight, thinking my own thoughts, and they were not all bright or happy ones. Sidney was very dear to me. We had been so much together, and, notwithstanding the difference in our ages, we were so alike in many of our thoughts and feelings ; so unlike, in fact, to the rest of the family, that I naturally shrank from everything that would take him from me. Nina, I saw, was quite capable of



doing that, for not merely was her prettiness an attraction—and she really was a handsome girl—but she was graceful and fascinating even in her brusqueness; and I could not wonder that Sidney should think so. But I was sorry, for we had commenced our search after the light together, and Nina would not help in the search. She would rather retard it, and that I knew by her own words.

Yet was I not forgetting after all that He who out of darkness called forth light was still all-powerful, and able to dispel every cloud? Would not He care for Sidney and help him as He had helped me? This seemed rather a “dark place” in our search, truly; but the “light shined in dark places,” and many a cloud was light with its silver lining.

I was not left to think about it too long. Mrs. Templeton came and sat down by my side with her work. She was knitting a handsome coverlet in bright-coloured wool, I think she said for a couch; just such an one, I told her, as would please mamma, and she gave me the pattern at once. She had many questions to ask about Jenny and her husband, and her new home; about mamma and her strange neuralgic affections, which the doctors found it so difficult to understand, but for which seaside change and seaside breezes had been so healing. She was very much interested in hearing about the children, of whom I had so long had charge; but in my own illness and recovery she expressed all manner of motherly sympathy, and said how she wished that I could stay with her for a while, and be thoroughly nursed back to health.

"Not, indeed," she added, "that I do not think you are in good hands. I know Mrs. Foster well, and what an excellent nurse she is; and she is such a *thorough* Christian that it is a blessing to be with her. Have you not found that out, my dear?"

"Oh, yes; she has been most kind; and, not only her words, but her *daily life* has done me good," I answered warmly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Templeton, with a half-sigh, "she is one of those who have received the light, and walk in it all the day; and I was glad to hear one thing of you from her. *You* have been seeking for the light, and have not sought in vain, have you?"

"No," I faltered, "I think I have not. All was so dark—I knew so little, so very little of God's Word—I know but little even *now*, but I can see more clearly—some of the darkness has passed."

"‘Until the day dawn, and the day-spring arise.’ Let that once arise, and it must go on to the perfect day. The clouds may come between, and the pure shining may for a time be obscured, but only for a time—the light must triumph!"

It was Kent Templeton who spoke. He had come up while I was speaking, and had overheard my words, and now stood where his sister had placed herself an hour before, on the white rug in the front of the fire, its full glow resting on his face. He was very like Nina, only the expression of their faces was so different—just now especially, for the light from within was shining, born of the words he had spoken.

"Light is such a beautiful, and yet so simple a simile, a little child may understand it. Light!

penetrating through all our darkness, our sin, our unbelief. Light! the perfection of all that is fair and clear and open. 'In *Thy* light shall we see light.' Christ the light, and all revealed in Him. Do not you see, Miss Bruce?"

"Yes; but I have but lately found it out," I answered diffidently.

"It is something to be able to say you *have* found it out. To have found Christ is to have found light. Away from Christ all is darkness; and the nearer we kee to Christ, the brighter the light on our way. I, too, have not long made this discovery, Miss Bruce," he presently added, taking his mother's seat at my side, for she had been called out of the room. "I had a long search after the light, and at one time nearly despaired of finding it. After your brother left college, I fell in with a lot of young fellows, who thought it clever to be sceptical on all matters of religion, who poured contempt on the cross and the Christ, deifying the goddess *Reason*. But even then I could not see any good in the false light she hung out; her theories were dark and unsatisfactory, and tended only to darkness. But I was able at last, by God's infinite mercy, to break the snare and escape. 'The entrance of His Word brought light,' and I find now that nothing clears away the clouds like that Word. You have found that, too, I think?"

"Yes, something fresh every day," I answered, looking up with eyes filled with tears. "Mr. Templeton, I want this for my brother, as well as for myself," I added desperately, as I looked towards



the piano, where Sidney was standing, turning over the pages of music for Nina.

"And I for my sister," he replied, looking grave. "Well, we can pray for them—pray, and believe, and *wait* for the answer. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' What a harvest to reap by-and-by! These words are not vain, Miss Bruce; what *we* have to do is to 'let our light shine.' We have 'to walk as children of light,' that our Father may be glorified in us."

"Is it not a difficult thing to do?" I asked gravely.

"In our own strength, yes; but not in *His*. The nearer we keep to the light, the less will be the difficulty. We are to walk *in* the light. *His* Word is light. We must cleave to *that*. Do you not see?"

I did see, and was comforted, though our pleasant talk was over, for Mr. Templeton, senior, came in with his wife, and I had to be introduced to him, and then we all went in to supper. After that I was tired, and was taken off to bed, Nina giving up her own room to me, it being the warmest and most cozy.

The rain beat against my window all night. I heard it at intervals, but it only made my repose more perfect. I was so luxuriously sheltered. Towards morning the rain ceased, and the wind died away; and when at last I rose, the sky was blue and cloudless again, and such a sun was shining that my pulse beat with joy at the sight.

The Templetons would gladly have kept us all the

next day, but I had letters to write, and preferred going back to the "Nest," particularly as I had not long to remain there; for I felt that I was daily growing stronger, and that, therefore, I must soon return to home and my new duties. Sidney, I knew, would willingly have accepted the invitation to stay, but he also had business which required him a few miles away. So, after an early lunch, Kent Templeton drove me back to the "Nest" among the rocks. The sun was fast drying up the evidences of the past day's rain, but the creeks were much swollen, and we crossed one with considerable difficulty; and in some places the water lay all across the roads, plentifully splashing us as we drove through it. We did not mind that, for the sun shone above us, bringing out the wattle blossom and wayside flowers, and the whole air was full of fragrance; and birds sang, and everything was green and verdant around us. Truly the time of the singing of birds was come.

"You must not take your sister away from the 'Nest' without coming again to see us," said Kent, as he shook hands with us at the old gateway.

"Oh! no," said Sidney; "I won't do that. In a day or two, if the weather is settled, she will be able to ride her pony, and then it will be an easy matter to come. But father does not seem inclined to allow her to remain much longer here, so we must make the best of our time. Do you preach at the little chapel on Sunday, by-the-bye?"

"Yes; in the morning."

"If the weather is fine, we shall see you then," said Sidney, as Kent drove off.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

PSALM iv. 6.

THE memory of those few last days at the "Nest" is very sweet—an atmosphere of rest and peace surrounds them—and many times since I have looked back to that quiet time with a yearning that a weary heart can alone understand. I have read Bunyan since those days, and side by side with that time of peace comes up the vision of his pilgrims in the valley, listening to the curious notes of the birds, in which Mercy so greatly delighted, or watching the little shepherd lad as he sang his song of content.

Content! I was more than content. The peace of God that passeth understanding possessed my soul. I was basking in the "light of His countenance," and would have been happy to have remained there always. But this is not God's way with His people. He leads them, and by right paths, but they are not always such as they would choose. It is good for them that sometimes the thorns are turned into their nests, and that thus they learn to fly—to aspire—as well as to lie down and rest.

The weather for many days was lovely, and my rocky lair put forth all its beauties. The days were all pleasant, joyous sunshine; the nights bright with a glorious moon. I wandered at will, wrapped in a plaid, in and out of the house, and among the rocks, singing to myself as I went, "God is good, God is



good!" for how visibly did His goodness appear in everything around me in all I saw; and how feelingly could I exclaim in a view of what He had done for me, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

I had some delicious rides, too, for Sid had brought my pony and habit, and gave me as much gentle exercise as I could take without fatigue. But the fresh, sweet air, and the pure diet, and, above all, the rest of mind, were wonderfully restoring me. Every day I gathered a fresh stock of health, and Mr. Foster, on his return from town, declared that he scarcely knew me again, I had so strangely improved—the roses were positively coming to my cheeks, that had looked so wan and pale before.

"We shall send you home quite well, I believe, now," said he heartily.

"I think you will, Mr. Foster," I replied. "Happiness is a great restorer, and I have been very happy here."

"You have found out the secret of true happiness, I fancy—'the light of God's countenance,'" he answered; "there is nothing like that to heal or to rejoice."

Yes; I had found it out, and it was a happy finding. Everything looked easy under that light. I was entering upon a new future. My position at home, I knew, would be very difficult. But what of that? With "the light of God's countenance" upon me, with His favour, His love, His care round about me, what needed I more? The whole pathway seemed bright and clear.

"And so you will remember the little 'Nest'

among the rocks when you leave it?" Mr. Foster said, as he stood in the sunshine, sharpening his axe on the great grindstone near the house. I was standing by, watching the sharpening process with interest—watching the revolving wheel, and the gradually fining edge, and thinking meanwhile of the whole-souled man who was guiding it.

"I shall never forget it, or those within it, Mr. Foster," I answered, with tearful earnestness. "I came here a very poor, ignorant little thing—ignorant of almost everything that has to do with Christ and His salvation, and I have learnt it all here—much of it through you and Mrs. Foster. I am not likely to forget; and if only my brother had found the Saviour for himself, how happy I should be."

"Well, never fear, but wait," said Mr. Foster quietly; "pray on, the answer will come by-and-by. It will give you something to pray for. Your Father has promised. He would have you remind Him of His promises. Remember the '*Thou hast said.*' Plead that, and all will be right."

I think it was harder for Sidney to leave the "Nest" than for me. Since we had become acquainted with the Templetons he had become more than ever attached to it. I went there once or twice with him, for the fine weather continued, and we all had many rides together, as they said that I might see some of the country round about before I left it. But Sidney managed, by some pretext or other, to visit Glen Linn every day; and it required no prophet to interpret the attractive power. Once a roll of music came through the post to him from

Adelaide. I had no occasion to inquire its destination; I knew it was not for me. I was, however, losing my first feelings of jealousy, and I believe I could have been glad if it had been any one else but Nina Templeton who had attracted him. But I knew that her influence over him was not a good one. She had a way of sneering with those red lips of hers, and her low, bantering laugh at anything sacred, like a cold, sharp wind, was enough to cut the delicate blossoms of faith, and nip the tender plant of conviction in the bud.

But what could *I* do? Absolutely nothing. I doubted Nina, in spite of all her loving, caressing manner. I doubted her faith and her constancy. I believed that she was only playing with poor Sid's affections, trying her power over him, and drawing him on in what I thought a very unprincipled manner. I can scarcely tell what made me think so. There were little occurrences, little incidents which came as a revelation to me. I would gladly have warned my brother, but knew not how; for he would never brook interference, I found, and I could not afford to lose his love and companionship. So leaving the "Nest" was less painful to me, because I hoped, when we were away, and he was less in her society, he might learn to forget her; and that we might be together as of old—Sid and I—with no one to come between us—the old search might be revived, and I, having found for myself, might be able to help him.

He was a kind, good brother to me, was Sid. Not for a moment would I have it suspected that he neglected me. He never did that. I was still his



darling sister, whom he was anxious, lovingly anxious, to bring back to health and strength. And so he took me daily long, pleasant rides or drives, during the few remaining days of our stay. And it was not always premeditated that the Templetons, brother and sister, often joined us. I certainly could not help seeing that when Nina was by, Sid had eyes and ears for no one else; and I did feel lonely sometimes, in the evening, when, after sitting awhile with me, he would put on his great coat and hat, and saunter out for a stroll or a ride. I knew well where his horse would take him; but I must have been exacting indeed to have expected him always to be at my side.

I little thought when I first caught sight of the "Nest," perched up among the rocks, and beaming a welcome from its open door upon me through the gathering twilight, that it would ever become so dear. It had been a veritable ark of refuge—a quiet resting-place, where I learnt some lessons that have never left me. At any time I can recall Mrs. Foster's soft-toned voice, as she used to go about her work, singing; and her contented, happy smile, day after day just the same. And her ready word for Jesus, whenever that word could unobtrusively be spoken. Dear, kind, motherly woman. She had no daughter of her own, but she took me to her heart, as only a motherly nature could, and literally nursed me back to health.

Mr. Foster's honest, outspoken words of wisdom—heavenly wisdom, and not the learning of the schools—was just the kind of teaching I needed in those days. His strong faith was so good to see—his trust

so infectious. The lessons I learned in that lovely nook were worth remembering, and many a time since has the recollection done me good.

But days will pass; and so the last evening of our stay came. It was arranged that we should take our departure after breakfast the next morning, that we might reach home early. Sidney was very much wanted at home, and my father thought I had better return with him, while the weather continued fine; for though July was nearly over, winter was not at an end, and August might still bring us much rain.

I had been busy all day packing, and late in the afternoon Sidney was cording my trunks, when Kent and Nina Templeton made their appearance. They had heard that we were suddenly recalled home, and had come to say "good-bye."

"You have had all the bad weather, little Bessie, you ought to have stayed through the spring, to see the country to perfection," said Nina to me. "But I suppose we could not make poor Glen Linn sufficiently agreeable?"

I waived that remark, and simply told her of my father's desires.

"Oh, well! You know how pleased we shall always be to have you for a visitor, whenever your father will spare you," Nina replied; and she looked at my brother, to let him know he was included in the invitation.

"Kent has promised to bring you to see us, Miss Nina," said Sidney significantly.

"Has he? Then I expect he will," she answered, with a degree of indifference which brought the

colour to Sid's cheek, and made him bite his lips. I saw Kent turn and look at her; but he said nothing.

They did not stay long; it was late when they came. We walked down with them to their horses, and while Sidney was assisting Nina to mount, Kent said in a low voice to me,—

“Don't forget to pray, Miss Bruce, for what we were speaking of; remember that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy. The light of God's countenance is something worth having, for ourselves and for those dear to us.”

And so they went off, and Sidney with them, while I went slowly back to the house. We were all sitting round the fire after supper when he came in again, having taken tea at the Glen. Mr. Foster had the large Bible before him open at the 4th Psalm. How beautiful that Psalm seemed to me as he read it! How impressive was the pause he made as he uttered the words, “Many will say, Who shall show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us,”—as though this was the *only* good he required—the secret of all blessedness!

And then that wonderful summing up of the whole—“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, O Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.” The words brought with them a rest—a calm unspeakable.

Such a prayer, too, followed—for Sid, for me, individually. Oh, how could Sid resist its persuasive eloquence? It seemed to embody everything we needed for this life and the next. I clasped the hand



of this strong, earnest Christian almost reverently when it was over. I had no voice to bid him good-night; but his "God bless you" came from his very heart. I was sure of that.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LIGHT OF HIS CLOUD.

"He caused the light of His cloud to shine."—JOB xxxvii. 15.

OF all that wonderful history of God's guidance of His people, the Israelites, through the wilderness, that part has always seemed to me the most beautiful, namely, the method He chose to guide them—"a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night." Advancing before them when they were to advance, resting when they were to rest—they were the visible tokens of the Lord's care for them, His care over them and of their safety. "The light of His cloud" guided them, never ceasing that guidance till they entered Canaan.

I had thought of this many a time as I looked up at some fleecy cloud touched with the glory of the setting sun, or at night turned into silvery liquid flame by the moon, over which it slowly floated, wondering in my heart whether the pillars of cloud and of flame that led those murmuring people were indeed such as these. I had never spoken to any one on the subject, only since my illness I had often thought how good it would be to have such visible guidance—guidance at least as palpable—to feel just so sure of the way in which to go.

Having thought out all this to myself, I was rather surprised, though greatly pleased, when Mr. Foster took out his big Bible directly after breakfast, saying that we must have one more reading together, and opened on the very subject of my thoughts.

That subject was more beautiful than ever, more clear, more expansive under his strong, earnest, though homely treatment. The light of that cloudy pillar seemed to stand out in bold relief; the flame of that column of fire illumined all the dark places of the future. It was not the Israelites alone that had this safe guiding. Through all generations *just thus* should His people be led. "The light of His cloud" should as surely lead through all difficulties to safety, the land of light and beauty should yet testify to the faithfulness of Him who "changeth not,"

"Nor knows the shadow of a turn."

And then, how the dear, good man prayed for a blessing upon us, that this light of "His cloud" might guide *us*—that in all times of temptation or trial we might be enabled to look up, and prove the power of His word, who faileth not.

I never heard his voice in prayer again, but I have not forgotten a single phrase or expression, and many a time has the memory done me good.

"*Safe* guiding, *careful* keeping, Miss Bruce," he exclaimed, shaking my hand heartily, as we were ready to drive off. "Don't forget that. And, Mr. Sidney, I look to you as to one of the lights. Take heed to let your light shine!"

Sidney shook his head. "There must be a light

before it can shine, friend," he gloomily answered, as, with a slight lifting of the reins, he gave the signal to old Nero, and cantered off.

I turned once and looked back at the "Nest," before we had quite got beyond its view. It stood out now in the full sunlight of a July morning, bright and pleasant with its patches of verdure among the piles of rock. The sun glittered on the windows, and at the doorway, where stood our kind host and hostess and their maiden, waving us a farewell. The next moment a turn of the road had taken us out of their sight.

We had a very silent drive of it after that for the next two or three miles, each busy with our own thoughts. Mine would have been happy ones, but for Sidney's parting words, and they took all the pleasure from them—no, not quite all—for the safe guiding, careful keeping, involved so much, and was for him as well as for me. If he had not yet *found*, he was seeking, and the promise to those who seek is that *they shall find*. I remembered that, and, hoping for my brother, I could still extract some of the sweetness of Mr. Foster's words, and look forward to other days.

But I was sorry for our little broken-up nest. We had been breathing such an atmosphere of Christianity, and I rather tremulously regarded that into which we were about to return. I had not even the comfort of feeling that I had a helper near me, for Sid was still groping in the darkness—a human helper, I mean, for I did not forget the "light of His cloud," or how plainly it told that the Lord Himself



would be near, and could and would help better than any human being.

Sid's thoughts were gloomy enough, judging by his face. He gave me a key to them after a while, as we slowly walked up a steep hill, which rose in our way, as with something of an effort, and without turning to look at me, he said,—

"Did you endorse my invitation to Nina Templeton, Bessie?"

"I had no opportunity, Sid," I replied, the colour coming into my face, for I knew, for my brother's sake, I had not tried to make one. "Did you wish me to do so?"

"Well—it would have been only polite," he answered, in a vexed tone. "She showed you a good deal of attention, Bessie."

"I gave her a general invitation, of course," I answered confusedly.

"It does not matter," he replied indifferently; "Kent said he would bring her, only it would have looked grateful, coming from you. I am sorry that our holiday is cut short for both our sakes."

"Yes; it has been very pleasant," I sighed, with an echo of the same sorrow, though with another reason for it. We had reached the top of the hill, and the wind blew bleakly across the wild expanse of prospect that lay before us. My brother turned then, and wrapped me closely in a large plaid shawl, saying, with a return of his old, fond manner,—

"We cannot afford to have you take cold now you are so much better." Then, with a playful touch of my cheek, he added,—

"Don't be gloomy on my account, little Sis ; it will all come right some day, I hope. I don't see my way out of the darkness yet ; but I may, you know, I may."

"Yes, indeed, the cloud is all light, Sid. His cloud, it will guide you."

We drove on rapidly then ; and during our homeward ride that was all that passed between us on the subject. Trivial things, indeed, we talked of—things that occurred on our way, and of home affairs ; but the "Nest" and Glen Linn were tabooed subjects.

I was growing thoroughly weary of my journey, though we had taken it easily enough, for Sidney was in no hurry to reach home apparently, and, partly for my sake, partly for his own pleasure, we dined at a little roadside inn on the way, and rested there for a couple of hours. It was therefore getting towards evening when we came in sight of our home. It looked very fair in the soft sunlight, which was just sending its parting beams over the whole of the front windows. We drove up the avenue of acacias towards the house, and I had alighted from the buggy, and was standing with my wraps under the verandah before any one discovered us. Then all at once the door flew open, and out rushed Maude and Lillie and Allie and the two little ones, overwhelming me with caressings. Another moment and my father—his dear face beaming with pleasure—had taken me in his arms, and mamma stood smiling at the door, awaiting her turn. It was a pleasant home-coming, after all.

"It's just about time you came home," said Gussy,

with a boyish bug, as he passed me to help Sid with the trap; and I began to think it was.

"I am thankful to see you so much better—so like your old self—Bessie dear," said mamma, laughing at the eager group of children that surrounded me, half deafening me with their separate morsels of intelligence.

"And you, mamma, how much stronger you look!" I replied, as I allowed myself to be dragged off between Maude and Lillie to my own little room, to which they were all eagerness to introduce me.

I did not wonder at their eagerness, it was such a bijou of a place. Jenny was right, I should never have remembered my little room. The furnishing was so lovely, so utterly different and new. Perhaps that newness prevented it seeming quite so home-like. I was a little *strange* in the midst of my new possessions; but it was so kind of dear father to have it done for me; and everything was so complete, so bright and light—from the carpet, with its dark ground and twining ivy-leaves, to the light, painted furniture, all in unison, and the hangings at the windows, and bed, and toilet. And such a pretty little writing-table stood in the window, with a large easy-chair, whose chintz cushions corresponded with the carpet, and looked so inviting that I threw myself into its arms, while the girls on either hand divested me of my wraps and hat, chatting gaily all the while.

We got back into the sitting-room at last, where a bright fire was giving its welcome, and the table was spread for tea. The lamp had just been lighted, and



at the same moment Sidney and Gussy and father came in.

"It's good to see you home again, my child," he said, placing a chair for me by his side, and taking my cold hands in his. "We've been missing you finely, all of us; and now Jenny has left us, we cannot get on without you."

Yes; there was something wanting—it was Jenny! I knew now. How I should miss her; for though we had never been much companions for each other, as sisters, we were nearest of an age. And during my illness we had come nearer together than we ever had done before.

There was much to tell—but more to hear—and Maude and Lillie, who were allowed to share our tea that night in honour of our return, made it very lively with their numerous items of news. So the tea-time passed joyously over; and I began to think, after all, that home was best for me.

I stood and looked out into the moon-lit garden, as I had often done before, when at last I was fairly shut in my room for the night, and thought of the "fiery pillar"—the cloud with the light in it that I had discovered as a guide for my way. My heavenly Father seemed very near to me that night. And I feel asleep at last, with the prayer on my lips, that my light—the tiny little light I had—might not be obscured, but might lead others out of the darkness and "*into the glorious light!*"

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.

“Let us put on the armour of light.”—ROM. xiii. 12.

It was the time for blossoms when Sidney and I came back to our home after that delightful holiday of rest and refreshment at the “Nest.” The orchard was full of bloom, and the fragrance penetrated everywhere. The time of the singing of birds had come, and it seemed as if all nature sang with them.

I was a great deal out in the fresh evening air on first coming home. They would not allow me to enter at once on my round of duties, and indeed I had not recovered my full strength, and had something to learn before I could take up the broken thread of duties that Jenny had left behind her. And so, meanwhile, I had daily long, delightful horseback excursions, sometimes with one brother, sometimes with the other, and sometimes with dear father himself. I grew strong and well in that fresh green spring, drinking in its healthy breezes and gaining rose-tints to my cheeks and light to my eyes; and all the time I was so happy in the light, and longing to make it known to others, that they also might share the joy with me.

With the exception of those rides, Sid and I were not much together after our first coming home. He had of course many duties to attend to, and a good deal of riding about the country, but I knew that more than once his horse’s head was turned in the direction of Glen Linn, by the tokens that he brought

back with him—some choice flower, or mineral specimen from the rocks near the “Nest,” or a message from Nina. He always gave these rather awkwardly, and as if he would gladly have avoided the necessity; and I shared a little in the awkwardness, for I was sorry that he still continued to be fascinated by what I feared would prove *false fire*. I wished with all my heart that he would forget Nina. He was always gloomy and reserved after one of these visits—less inclined for my company, and with the look of unrest more than ever on his brow and eyes.

Things had very much changed since my illness and visit to the “Nest,” especially so since Jenny’s marriage. I think mamma must have missed her dreadfully, for she had always taken the whole burden of household management upon herself, and there had been so little, really, left for mamma to do. Now she had to superintend and see after a great deal, and it must, really, have fallen rather heavily on her for a time. After a while I was able greatly to relieve her, though of course, being younger and less accustomed to the work, I could not occupy all Jenny’s place. I did the best I could, and day by day gained experience; so that by degrees mamma allowed herself more relaxation, and I fell into the old busy life again.

I could seldom be spared away from home now, but I certainly had more time to myself, for I had nothing to do with the children. Miss Upton was a perfect disciplinarian, and kept them in excellent order, and naturally they were better under her surveillance than under mine. Sometimes, indeed, I



took them with me for a walk, or a run, or a drive in the pony carriage—two or three at a time, or all together—giving them pleasure and their governess a rest. Now and then on Sunday evenings I sat under the old willow and read and talked with them, and we sang together some of the few sweet children's hymns that we then knew; and those were peaceful, happy times; Maude especially seemed to love them.

I fancied sometimes that there was a little turning of Maude's young face towards the light. She listened so eagerly when I talked, and now and then I noticed tears in her eyes after one of our songs together. Perhaps because her time was much engrossed by her governess and her studies she enjoyed the more entirely the moments we spent under the willow; but I had hope of my young sister nevertheless.

It was not all smooth travelling. There were even then little roughnesses in the pathway—little encounters with unseen, but no less real, foes—all calling for the putting on of the "armour of light," such as every soldier of the cross must wear. It was a l new to me, and the very necessity for the equipment frightened me.

I was growing strong and well after my illness, and, though I had plenty to do, yet the employment was good for me. I went about singing at my work during those bright spring days, and was so bright myself that my father often looked at me with a smile.

"You are quite a little sunbeam of late, Bessie," he

exclaimed fondly, one day ; "that illness was good for you."

"Yes, papa ; it was," I simply answered, my cheeks aglow ; for the recollection of *how* good it was, and how, "before I was afflicted I went astray," came overpoweringly to me.

"It was, was it ?" he said, with a laugh. "How do you make that out ?"

"I had a lesson to learn by it, and I learnt it," I answered in a low voice.

"A lesson, eh ?—a lesson of patience ? I do not think you needed *that* lesson, Bessie, child !" he answered, stroking my hair fondly. "I always thought you were a model of patience with the little ones."

"Not always, papa ! But I did not mean that," I answered, venturing to look into the kind eyes that were bending down over me. "I had found out that I was a sinner, and needed a Saviour, and I learnt to know Jesus, my Saviour, while I was ill."

Papa was quite silent for a moment ; then he gravely answered, "You are not going to be ill again, my child, I hope !"

"Oh, no ! papa. I am quite well, and happy."

He looked at me a moment, then, rising suddenly, replied, "I believe you are ; and fresh and bright as a spring rose. Well, keep so ! and I shall think you have learnt to some purpose," he added, as he left the room.

I sat still a long time after that, my cheeks still hot with the effort I had made to let a little of the light shine. I did so want papa to know something of my

new hopes and aspirations—something of the brightness that had entered my life—and yet I had been so uncertain of *how* he would take it. I did not think he would have received it so quietly, yet I was half frightened at his last words, “I must keep bright for him to believe that I had learned well.” That was what my tiny *light* was to do—to shine for Jesus. Oh that it might !

But I was not to go a warfare at my own charge—I knew *that*. The very armour I was to wear was all provided, and Jesus Himself was my Captain. While I obeyed His orders, and wore His armour, I could not fail.

But I knew well enough, now that those words had been spoken, that papa’s eye would be upon me, and that for the honour of my Lord my little light must be trimmed. I remembered, too, the wistful expression that came into his dear eyes as he looked down upon me—the expression of a bygone memory. Perhaps I reminded him of my mother—his first wife—and who could tell what the memory might not do for him ?

To *shine* for Jesus ! I went at first rather soberly about my work, sobered by the very greatness of the thought, for *Him* ! for *Him* !—to show what His love had wrought ; to show that His pardon had brought joy and light and peace into *my* life. Yes, clearly that was the work before me, and in the face of all difficulties I must do it.

But the clouds *might* come, as they had come before ! Ah ! they might ; but only for a while. The sun was always there to dissipate those clouds, and the cry,



"Lighten my darkness, O Lord," would not be overlooked by Him who "out of darkness bringeth forth light."

I had learnt, too, that to *shine* I must walk in the light, and with my armour in good condition, to enable me to contend with the powers of darkness.

So, after all, thought resolved itself into this: to shine for Jesus I must keep near to Him, that the light of His countenance might rest upon me, even as the glory on the face of Moses. And with that thought, all my fear departed. *He* would make the light appear in me. And the closer I kept to Him the more I should honour Him.

It was a happy thought, and it made me happy. But, oh, how I wished that my dear father knew for himself the happiness of living near to Jesus! I often thought of this, when I suddenly found his eyes resting upon me, with the same wistful look in their gaze.

To shine for Jesus! Yes; and when I remembered the source from which all light *must* come: that Christ Himself was *light*, and that every little ray must be derived from Him, I was comforted, for in Him only is light, and no darkness at all.

"Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen—  
A glorious sun that wanes not, nor declines:  
Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,  
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.  
All may depart!—I fret not, nor repine,  
While I my Saviour's am, while He is mine."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE SWEETNESS OF LIGHT.

"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."—ECCLES. xi. 7.

THE spring of that year was, as I have said, both bright and pleasant. I often look back to it in the far distance, and sun myself again in its sweetness. It had many sources of pleasure for me. Physically I was better and stronger than I had been for years. The fever had swept away with it much that was unhealthy, and had purified with its heat. Then I had become all at once an important member of the household—important, not only to my stepmother, whom I could relieve of many duties, but to my father and brothers, who consequently made much of me, giving me all kinds of pet names. "Sunbeam" was a favourite of dear father's. I was glad of it, for it reminded me of the work I had to do—to *shine*. Above all, it was a happy spring to me, because I had found for myself the *sweetness* of the light, and was young and fresh in the Christian life, and everything around me seemed so bright and beautiful.

I saw but little of Jenny. Soon after her marriage her husband had important business to transact in Melbourne, and she of course went with him. Sidney, too, was absent for some weeks up at the old run. It was shearing-time, and he went in papa's place, who had not been very well for some time, though he made few complaints. I missed Sid very much; it seemed so long since we had had one of

our quiet talks together : indeed, it almost appeared as though he avoided them, even when he was at home.

One lovely morning, just before spring settled down into the heat of summer, I was sitting under the verandah at the side of the house, with a basket of peas at my side and another in my lap, into which I had volunteered to shell them. It was very pleasant and cool where I sat. The verandah was trellised in, and covered with large blue convolvuluses and roses, and the light came shimmering through the leaves around me with the soft, subdued radiance that we sometimes see through stained-glass windows in the shadow of a cathedral's aisle. Here, as I sat, I could breathe the sweet fragrance of the flowers, though few were visible to me, excepting the large blue morning glories and the climbing roses, red, white, and yellow, around and above me ; but the perfume, the rarest perfume, did not come from these, but from a thick bed of violets, so large and fragrant that the very air was permeated with their sweetness.

How quiet it was ! Papa and mamma were out for the day ; I had seen them drive off an hour before. The children were busy with their governess in the distant schoolroom ; not even the sound of the servant's voices reached me ; only the low, drowsy murmur of the bees, or the twitter of a bird, or the croak of a tree-frog, or the rustling of the leaves as the breath of spring passed over them.

I looked above me as my fingers went mechanically forward with their work, watching the soft light as it filtered through the leaves, and my heart gave



a little, answering throb as I remembered words of that morning's reading, "Truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." It was another aspect of this glorious light in which I had so long been basking. What a number of aspects it had, and how it seemed that the more I gazed into its depths, fresh views of loveliness arose, like the colours of a kaleidoscope—ever changing, but ever beautiful.

But this *sweetness* of the light. Yes, I could understand a little of it now; and that its entrance could sweeten all the bitterness of life. It was, in fact, the *sweetness* of life itself. True, I had not known much sorrow. I was very young when my mother died, and since then the *great* troubles had been kept from my path. But every life has its minor tones, its little frets, and vexations, and cares, that will force themselves into shadows; no less heavy and dark because the rest of the world are not cognizant of them. But with the entrance of light, the shadows flee away, and we are satisfied with its sweetness and beauty, while it steals away all the bitterness from our cup.

I was sitting smiling over my work—thinking of the time when, in the midst of my darkness and obscurity, the day-star from on high had dawned upon me, dispelling the darkness and revealing his marvellous light, when a footstep sounded on the gravel walk, and Sidney came round the corner of the house.

He started when he saw me, but came up to my side, flinging himself down upon one of the low garden-chairs that stood in the verandah, in that listless

manner so indicative of the state of his mind, that I looked anxiously up at him.

"Well, little Sis!" he presently exclaimed; "what now? Let me tell you that with last night's dew and this morning's sun you are in a very bower of sweets; and *you* are as sweet as any blossom. Why, you look as if you had been imbibing the dew and the sunshine yourself."

"'He cometh down like dew on the tender herb,' and 'truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun,'" I answered, with a smile.

"So, Bessie, you have found this all out for yourself—it is all easy to *you*."

"But *you* have not given up the search, dear Sid?" I asked eagerly, looking up for his answer. "The sweetness is worth seeking."

"I don't know, Bessie. Women more easily take to these things. Men have doubts, and must *reason* out the thing. They cannot take things on simple faith."

"And why not?" I gently asked. "Is it not the pride of intellect which men so much esteem that keeps them back from the simple truths of the Gospel? Just because they are so simple—so easy—they will not receive them. It seems to me it is another rendering of the question, 'Are not the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?' How well that servant seemed to understand his master's mind when he answered, 'My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some *great* thing, wouldst thou not have done it?'"

"Yes, but I suppose it is natural to like to do great things. No doubt pride has much to do with it.

"And this is why these things are 'hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes,'" I sadly answered.

"I dare say you are right, Bessie; at any rate you are happy, for you came at once to the light, and all was revealed to you—while a thousand shadows rise up between it and me. It is the accumulation of little things—the motes in the sky—that increases the darkness; but there they are, and they do their work."

"Yes," I sighed sadly, "the works of darkness."

"Ah! and a fine train of them. Unbeliefs and doubts of all kinds; and they are not easy to dissipate, either!" said Sidney, rising as usual to his full height, and uneasily stretching himself, as if tired of the subject.

"But they can be dissipated, dear Sid; they *can*. Don't you remember when we were at the 'Nest,' how we stood one morning and looked down upon the thick mist, which hung like a dark curtain over everything, hiding trees and hills, and creek and rocks; and how, as we looked, the curtain began to roll up, and up, curling away in thick gatherings, till the landscape was left all bright, and fair, and smiling? There was *light* in that cloud, and the cloud itself was soon dissipated. It was the sun that did it. It is Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, that can dispel the motes, dear Sid!"

"Beautiful and poetic enough in theory, Sis; but it's the practice, the *hard* practice, that fails too often; and you see, after all, we are practical beings."



"Oh, but it is not mere poetry. Darkness and light are every-day, familiar terms ; we can perfectly understand them as they succeed to each other ; they form a part of our life. And surely it is easy also to understand the darkness of the *mind* !—and to me it seems quite as easy to believe that Christ's love can bring light."

"Easy to you ; but I do not see it."

"There is one prayer so beautiful and easy to think of, that it seems to me, dear Sid, that it *must* bring light. 'Lighten my darkness, O Lord !' Do you think that Christ, who is Himself the light, will fail to answer such a petition ? I don't !"

He made no answer, but walked two or three times up and down the verandah, without speaking, picking off buds and leaves as he passed, and scattering them with reckless fingers. I watched him furtively, as he paced backwards and forwards. Such a fine, tall, nobly-built fellow he was, with his light hair curling under the old, slouching straw hat, which he would wear, and throw about in any corner ; and his soft blue eyes, with their well-defined brows, contracted now with painful thought ; and as I watched him I prayed that prayer myself for him, "Lighten *his* darkness, O Lord, for Christ's sake !"

He turned the corner presently, and left me alone. But I could sit quietly no longer ; my work, too, was finished ; the peas were all ready for the cook. So, rising and gathering both dish and basket of shells, I left my pleasant seat, and went in the back way to the house, leaving them in the kitchen as I passed through. I had just reached the parlour, and had opened the

piano for an hour's practice, when Sidney came to the window, rather excitedly, exclaiming,—

“There are some visitors coming up the road, Bessie. I think they are Nina Templeton and Kent. Won't you come out to receive them?”

There was such a glad light in his eye, that I could not refuse ; and yet, as I reluctantly rose and followed my brother to the door and down to the front gate, I felt that he was being “taken in ;” and I was helpless to prevent it. How would it all end ?

Yes, it was Nina ; Nina with all her old fascinations, making her way as she always did ; and poor Sidney was soon more under her influence than ever. She was very affectionate and loving to me, so delighted with everything about the house and grounds, so gracefully at her ease, too, and so flatteringly kind to Sidney, that I saw anything that I could say would be useless. And after all *what* could I say ? I only suspected that she was playing with him. I could not certainly know. There was nothing, at any rate, that I could speak of : neither could I account for her power over myself, or understand how, with that deep sense of reluctance, I felt I yet had consented to accompany Sidney to a party at the Glen on the following week.

I stood a long time at the open window of my bedroom that night, looking out upon the moon-lit paths, and the shadows that came between. The shadow had fallen across *my* light. In the morning I had basked in its effulgence ; in the evening it was obscured by a mist. My heart was heavy with foreboding—too heavy to go to sleep.

After all, I thought, at last, gently closing my window, "Our darkness cannot do away with the sweetness of God's light. The light is constant: and *it can* penetrate all dark corners. Poor Sidney may be led away for a time, but God has promised to hear prayer for light. He has *promised*—He has *promised*. He will not—He cannot!—break His word."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### REBELLING AGAINST THE LIGHT.

"Those that rebel against the light: they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof."—JOB xxiv. 13.

I HAD very little of my brother's company during the few days that intervened between the call of the Templetons and our visit to the Glen. He appeared, purposely, to avoid being alone with me, and whenever I was near he indulged in extravagant spirits, and generally had either young Miller or Gussy, or some one else with him. But all this was so unnatural to him, that I knew quite well it was only assumed, to conceal the deep under-current of feeling that existed; and that though, for a time, apparently forgotten, our compact under the willow that long-past summer evening was still remembered.

Still remembered! but thrust on one side, just as we close our eyes to that which we have no desire to see. So was he shutting his eyes to the light, because it was making revelation hard for his manly pride to endure—revelation that little accorded with present actions, and against which he therefore rebelled. And



all this I could associate with his visits to the Glen; it was easy to me to tell when he had been there, either by the recklessness of his manner, by his excessive spirits, or by his gloomy reserve. And that Miss Templeton had much to do with his turning his back to the light would have been patent to every one, had they known what I did.

It was by no positive opposition that she won her ends; there was no open resistance to the light, but by a thousand little irritating words—by a laugh—or a curl of the lip, or a light sarcasm, that told more effectively than a direct blow, she had no difficulty in making her influence felt. And on my poor Sid, infatuated as he was by the charm of her face, and the fascination of her manners, that influence was too apparent.

And what could I do, a quiet looker-on, seeing the evil, but powerless to help? I could only pray that the light might disperse the works of darkness, and clear shining might succeed these heavy clouds.

One of the loveliest of the last spring days was that appointed for our visit. Our horses were brought round to the front of the house about noon, just when the sun was highest in the heavens, but a pleasant little breeze was playing with the jessamine leaves, shaking the perfume from their yellow petals, and delightfully tempering the heat. Had our ride to terminate anywhere else, I should have enjoyed the anticipation, for horse exercise was always exhilarating to me, but I did not want to go to the Glen. I had no pleasure in Nina's society, and I dreaded it heartily for my brother. I had a horror, too, of

"parties," and shrank into myself at the bare idea of the coming evening. Sidney, I knew, had no greater love for them than I had; but then Nina could reconcile him to any disagreeables, and he uttered no word of dissent—on the contrary, he seemed full of life and spirits; and we rode gaily along, chatting about everything and everybody, only ignoring any approach to the *one* subject that was uppermost in my heart, but of which I dared not speak.

Neither had he ever made me a confidant of his feelings towards Nina; he rather, indeed, avoided speaking of her at all; and when the mention of her name was inevitable, there was an assumed carelessness in his manner that would have revealed to any one less experienced than himself what it was intended to conceal.

The ride was lovely, the breeze invigorating, and the trees and grass bright with the spring rains. We passed by paddocks of green corn, bearing rich promise of future harvest; by large spacious hay-fields, partly shorn of their fragrant burden; by orchards, heavily laden with green fruit and delicate blossoms; by running creeks, brisk and frolicsome with the recent rains. How bountifully was God preparing food for man and beast! And oh, how wonderful it was to think of! The great and good God was *my* God. I was not afraid to call Him Father! How wonderful it all was, indeed!

I remembered well having passed that same way, weak and despairing, and yet not without some little hope amidst the despondency. I remembered also the gladness of those days among the rocks, when

the light dispelled my mental darkness, and the warm rays of the Sun of Righteousness came in upon my soul.

Yes! I had indeed found light. But Sid—my brother!—my beloved brother! Had what to me had proved a blessing brought only the reverse to him? Why? ah, why should this be?—he so infinitely wiser than I! and still left in darkness?

I had yet to learn that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; that the wise man must lay aside his wisdom, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word of God.

I thought all this out as I galloped along the hard, dry road, gradually drawing nearer and nearer to the dear old "Nest."

I knew we were nearing it, by the rocks on either hand—great jutting boulders, scattered plentifully here and there, and cropping out of the soil in unexpected places, sometimes even in the very centre of the roadway, causing our path to be rather circuitous. Oh, yes! I knew it again, and was beginning to look out eagerly for the "Nest" itself, when my brother, who had stopped a little behind me, suddenly rode forward to my side, exclaiming,—

"You are as silent as a mouse, Bessie, child! Where are your thoughts?"

I might well have returned the question, for he had been quite as silent. Would he like me to tell him all my thoughts, just then? I thought not, and so only replied,—

"I was thinking of that time we first came here, Sid, and of the dear little 'Nest.' We are getting quite near it, are we not?"



"No! that would be out of our way. We have no time to spare, and shall see nothing of it. You see that road to the right? We turn off there. It leads directly to the Glen. If we were on the top of those rocks, Bessie, we should see Glen Linn stretching itself beneath us."

"Have you ever seen it?"

"Often," he replied, but with a slight accession of colour, as he realized the admission he had made. "It is a point from which it looks most lovely. One just catches a glimpse of the white terrace through the shrubbery of trees, the lawn, the acacia avenue, and that picturesque morsel of a creek that winds round the southern portion of the grounds—that, I suppose, you have not seen."

"No, I have seen nothing of Glen Linn but the house itself and its immediate surroundings," I returned.

"You do not care for it, either, I know," said Sidney, in rather an aggrieved tone. "But, Bessie, I think for *my* sake you might try to be a little more cordial in your manner. Kent is an old friend of mine—an old college-mate; and it is strange if one's sisters cannot be friendly."

"I do not wish to be uncordial, Sidney," I gravely answered.

"It is rather ungracious that you should be so, when you are treated so exactly the reverse. Mrs. Templeton always inquires after you in the kindest manner, and once expressed a wish that you and Nina could become better acquainted."

I did not know what to reply to all this, for I dare

say I did appear ungracious. As he could not see from my standpoint, he could scarcely interpret my actions, so we fell into silence again for a time, riding along with our backs to the "Nest." There was not room among the trees for us to ride abreast; the roadway was a mere narrow track. In some places the branches met overhead, affording a delightful shade. I could reach up and gather the gum-blossoms as we passed under them.

Sidney rode on before me. How well he looked in his light summer suit and straw hat! How perfectly he rode, erect, and yet with a graceful ease that it was pleasant to see! The horse, too, was worthy of his master, with his dark, glossy coat and flowing mane, and delicate paces.

Was it possible that between me and this brother—of whom I was so proud—whom I so dearly loved—a coldness might grow up? Must I try to like Miss Templeton if I would retain his love and confidence?

And yet I knew so well that she was drawing him away from the light, and making him rebel against its revelations. He would find it out for himself some day. I little knew how soon.

The sun was sloping downwards through the trees, and the shadows were falling more thickly in our path, as at last, in turning the corner of a huge mass of rock, broken and jagged, though partly clothed with verdure, we came upon a full view of Glen Linn and its park-like gate.

We did not make our entrance there, however. Sidney, who appeared perfectly "free" of the Glen, skirted the huge hedge of hawthorn that led towards

the back of the house, to a side gate in view of the stables. We dismounted under the shade of an immense acacia, beautiful now with its snowy blossoms ; and Sidney, taking possession of my parcel, gave the horse into the care of a boy who came forward to take them, and slowly led the way, through another gate, back to the house.

How very beautiful it all looked—so perfectly kept—lawns, and beds of flowers, and trees, and shrubs ! The sound of merry voices and gay laughter reached us as we walked along, under the trees, towards the front of the house ; and presently we caught a glimpse of a croquet party on a well-kept lawn, half concealed by a mass of flowering shrubs.

The sudden rush of colour to my brother's face and the flash of his eye directed me to Nina. She was standing a little aloof from the rest, trifling with her mallet, and looking very lovely in her light summer drapery—some gauzy, transparent material of a pale rose colour, that fell in graceful folds around her. She was not alone, however ; for leaning against a tree, by her side, and looking at her with evident admiration, and something more, I recognized Mr. Murray—a wealthy squatter of whom I had often heard.

I cannot tell how it was that at that moment I was sure of my brother's fate ; and that, though I felt for his disappointment, I could not help also being rather glad. Nina, I was positive, could never make him happy ; she was not worthy of him ; but how could she stoop to entangle him, and draw him away, when she had nothing to give him in return.



I was just feeling anxious about Sidney's white face—for the colour had left it very pale, as it receded—when she caught sight of, and came eagerly forward to meet us, just as impulsive, just as flattering in her welcome as ever; and then in the coolest, most natural manner possible she made us known to Mr. Murray, committing Sidney to his charge, while she hurried off with me to the house, with just the old warm, yet imperious ways, doing and saying all sorts of kind things, and yet with that certain degree of patronage, from which I instinctively shrank. There was something so unreal about it all.

I shall not attempt to recall all the bitterness of that time, for a mist of pain still lingers over the memory with its mixture of luxury, and flowers, and song. To me there was a minor tone in all the music, for early in the evening I had learnt from others what I had so long suspected myself, that my brother, my noble, warm-hearted brother, had been for Nina Templeton the mere amusement of an hour; that she was, in fact, engaged to Allen Murray, and the marriage was to take place at an early date.

And this was the end of my poor Sid's wild dream? I could not regret it, though my heart bled for his pain. He, too, had found out the true position of things. I soon discovered that, though perhaps only myself and Nina knew the bitterness of the discovery to him. I was resolved to be fully satisfied that it really was so; for *certainty*, however painful, is assuredly more healthful than suspense. And so, when accident brought us face to face together, and a little apart from the rest, near the

close of the evening, I quietly asked if what everybody said about her intended marriage with Mr. Murray was true.

"If everybody says it, it must be so," she replied with a light laugh, and a little accession of colour.

"We never heard of it before," I continued ; and there was probably something rather pointed in my words, for she coloured more deeply, though she still laughed.

"Oh, well," she answered, after a moment's embarrassment, "Allen has been away for some months in Victoria ; there was nothing to talk about ; he has only just returned. Everybody must know it now, I suppose."

"Yes," I replied gravely. "It appears to me, though, that where there is no need of concealment, frankness is a virtue."

"Oh, if you are going to preach, I won't listen to you," she answered, still with a laugh, and yet with a slight resentment in her voice. "One doesn't always wish one's affairs to be discussed, even among friends ; and there is no need to take up one's chains before they are forged, my dear. Remember that when you are in a similar position." And with a playful flick of her fan she went off.

It would have made every difference, though, had we known. I did not know how far Sidney had gone, or how she had skilfully parried any direct appeal on his part, while as skilfully drawing him on against his better judgment, till he shunned the light, and dreaded its influence, and would have given up everything for her love.

I could not but rejoice that the snare was broken, but I sorrowed for his sorrow, and as I saw from afar what the efforts to hide his disappointment was costing him, I wished we were away from the Glen, and safely at home.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A RIFT IN THE DARKNESS.

“Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”—Job xxxiii. 29, 30.

AFTER that confirmation of my fears the pleasures of the evening were a blank, if indeed they had ever been anything else. I had to answer when addressed, and to endeavour to do so as coherently as possible, when my thoughts were elsewhere. But, I imagine, I was voted *quiet* and *reserved*, and was therefore gradually left alone. Once or twice I had to contribute my quota of music. I do not know how it could be so well received, for on my part it was merely mechanical execution. I had no life to throw into the performance. I was repeatedly urged to sing, but that was entirely out of the question; I had no voice to give them that night. When they danced, I sat quietly in a corner, turning over a large book of engravings, and from that corner I covertly watched my brother and Nina.

Nina was in extravagant spirits, and inclined to be coquettish with Mr. Murray, who was rather demonstrative in his attentions. I could not blame him for



that, as he certainly had a right to show that the diamonds he had placed on her finger were no idle form, but a veritable *avant-courier* of the coming event. More than once I saw a decided look of displeasure contract his brow as she talked or danced with Sidney, as though he had heard of her flirtations with him, and resolved to put a stop to them by decidedly proclaiming his position.

After that first revelation Sidney showed no further sign of feeling that any one excepting myself or Nina could comprehend, and she was too shallow to understand the sufferings of a true heart. How I wished that the evening was over, and that we were on our way home! I suppose our invitation was designed as a revelation of her position, and intended to put a stop to the pretensions she had encouraged; but what a cruel revelation it was to my brother, and how heartlessly contrived!

We were to sleep there, of course, that night; but late in the evening Sidney came to me and said that he had business with the overseer on the next station; and as the night was brilliant with moonlight, he would ride over at once, and call back for me the first thing in the morning.

"Make your adieus to-night, Bessie, as I shall," he added, "and be at the gate by seven o'clock, waiting for me; we will breakfast on the road."

We were standing together in the hall—Nina, Sidney, and I—when he took his leave. How well I remember the whole scene—the broad hall, with its stained-glass windows at either end, the open door, and the flight of steps, white in the pure flood of

moonlight. It wore the aspect of peace, yet peace was far from it.

"Not very kind of you to hurry away like this, Mr. Bruce," said Nina, not heeding his extended hand. "I do not see the necessity for it. I thought you intended to stop."

"It is better as it is, Miss Templeton. There is a necessity, however," he added in low tones, "and I may as well say good-night and good-bye *now*, as we shall not meet again."

He took her hand a moment, then, almost flinging it from him, went rapidly down the steps, and was presently concealed by the thick foliage of the shrubbery.

"Give a wilful man his way!" said Nina, with a little forced laugh. "Why, Bessie, child, your brother is particularly brusque to-night. Come, we won't follow his example; our friends will miss us!" and seizing my hand, she led the way back across the hall to the lighted rooms. But I was too heart-sad to join in the revelry any more—revelry, indeed, which was quite uncongenial to me, and after a while I stole away to the room which I was to share with one of the lady guests, and quietly went to bed.

To bed—but certainly not to sleep. Thoughts came crowding in too heavily for that. Sorrowful, painful, and indignant thoughts—all intermingled; for though I was glad that Nina's influence over my brother was gone, yet I was filled with indignation at the treatment he had received.

So, I lay looking out into the moonlight at the

shadows of leaves and branches that fell across the curtain, and upon the bit of dark-blue sky with its one twinkling star, that a lifted corner of that curtain revealed, and wondered for a time at this sorrow that had come into my life ; at the heavy cloud that had gathered over its sunshine, and trying to recall some words of hope that might make a little rift in the cloud.

It seemed so strange to me, *then*, that in the midst of Sidney's earnest seeking after the light, that the clouds should gather so thickly. Why, he it was who first put into words the *thirst* after the light that was becoming so overpowering in my own heart, but for which I had no words to express. Hey ! he was in earnest in those days—he wanted to find Christ as much as I did. But then, in the very midst of the seeking, came a snare to lure him away from the object of his search. An *earthly* object appeared to him as an angel of light ; and Nina Templeton, for the gratification of a little vanity, the exhibition of her own power, drew him so completely into her toils that he was powerless to resist ; and then, as I afterwards heard, dashed all his hopes to the ground, as with a light laugh she showed her engagement-ring, and told him she had only friendship to offer him. I did not hear this till long after, and then through a friend to whom she had heartlessly told the whole story.

Well, this was the cloud ; but there was a little rift in it, revealing the light beyond. The *snare* was broken ; and my brother, though sorely wounded, was *free*. Could I not safely leave the result with my



heavenly Father? Would He not out of this darkness bring forth light? Then suddenly the recollection of some of Mr. Foster's words came to me as I lay,—“Your Father has *promised*—He would have you *remind* Him of His promises. Remember the ‘Thou hast said.’ Plead that, and all will come right.”

These words were like a warm gush of sunshine in the chill darkness—“Thou has said.” Ah, how many promises I might plead in behalf of my brother! I lay thus, with the distant sounds of music and laughter in my ears, but my heart was far away, praying as I had never prayed before, that even out of this darkness the light might appear.

I went to sleep at last, and slept so heavily, as sorrow sometimes will make us sleep, that I never heard the entrance of the young lady who was to share my room. The light of day was stealing dimly through the lace curtains when I woke in the morning, and looking at my watch found it was nearly half-past six o'clock.

I rose softly, and dressed quietly, that I might not disturb my companion; and after a few earnest repetitions of last night's prayer, with a feeling of the loving care around me, of One who can sympathize with all our sorrows, and knows what is best for us, I took up my little valise and stole from the room, down the broad staircase, and through the hall, the front door of which was already open, for the servants were up, though not visible, and so forth into the morning air.

How extreme the quiet seemed after the last night's

revelry! My way lay past the deserted croquet lawn, which still bore the impress of the previous evening's game. One or two mallets still lay about, and a bright ribbon fluttered from an adjacent shrub. How beautiful it all looked in the morning light, half touched by the rising sun, which here and there broke through the foliage of the avenue.

"Ah, well!" I thought, as I slowly walked along towards the gate through which Sid and I had entered the day before, "clouds and darkness may come between, but they cannot prevent the eventual triumphant bursting through of the light. Sid will yet find it, and together we shall rejoice."

I had nearly reached the gate, and was wondering whether I should find my brother waiting for me, when a rustle in the shrubbery to my right slightly startled me, especially as, not my brother, but Nina Templeton, came eagerly forward. Nina, in a loose morning robe, her soft, abundant hair over her shoulders, pushed away from her face under a grey felt hat of her brother's, her face looking unnaturally pale in the chill air and light of the lovely early morning.

"You are thinking all sorts of evil of me, I know, Bessie Bruce," she exclaimed, seizing my hands in her old impetuous, imperious manner; "and no doubt," she added half defiantly, "a great deal of it is just; but don't forget that *you* have the best of it. Yours is the *belief*, mine the *doubts*: yours is the *light*, mine the *darkness*. I suppose I am to be pitied; well, maybe I am. At any rate people in the dark do many reckless things—many which they would

gladly *undo*, if they could. My deeds, I know, have many of them to be repented of at leisure. Good-bye, dear ; think as well of me as you can ;" and before I could answer her, or recover from my surprise, she had disappeared among the trees of the shrubbery. At the same moment a groom appeared leading my horse from the stable, and assisting me to mount, he led it by the bridle through the gate. There I found Sidney, impatiently pacing up and down, as though he had waited some time, and was in haste to be gone.

What a relief it was to see him, for I had been imagining all kinds of evils, and now here he was, grave—very grave, that was all—not a whit less kind and attentive, as he came round as usual examining my girths and bridle, and giving me his usual kiss. I noticed as he rode off that he gave one long, lingering backward look at the white walls gleaming through the dark foliage, as though he was taking a last farewell, and Glen Linn was lost to us for ever.

"What could we do if it were not for Thee, our Fountain of Light?" I thought, as I cantered on in advance of my brother, that he might not see the tears in my eyes, and rejoicingly came Bonar's beautiful words to my mind—

"Light of the world! for ever, ever shining,  
There is no change in Thee ;  
True light of life, all joy and health enshrining,  
Thou canst not fade nor flee."



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE CLOUD THAT COMETH BETWIXT.

"With clouds He covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt."—JOB xxxvi. 22.

"INTO the light! into the light!" These words re-echoed in my ears day and night for weeks after that parting at Glen Linn. Light there seemed none for my brother, and the shadow fell upon my own mind, till I wondered when the brightness would return. Not, indeed, that I doubted for a moment the pure effulgence of that light, or that it must eventually triumph over all the powers of darkness. I did not even doubt that this beloved brother of mine would ultimately be brought under its influence, or that the shadows would yet pass away which so heavily fell over my own mind; but I was growing very weary of the waiting, and in those days I was so much alone, shut in to my own thoughts and feelings, that the waiting was indeed a difficult thing.

It was the day of our melancholy return from Glen Linn—the more melancholy to me by the very evident effort my brother made to shake off his despondency and talk on indifferent subjects—I had seen but little of him. My father had business in Adelaide, and not feeling inclined for the journey, or having other occupation at home, Sidney was despatched in his place. I was glad of it at the time, hoping that it would draw his mind from Glen Linn and Nina. But one sight of his worn face on his

return was enough to convince me how utterly useless the bustle of the city and the hurry of business had proved to allay the fever of the mind. He was absent nearly three weeks—I had counted the days of his absence ; and yet I was glad to have him away from any danger of encounter with Nina Templeton. Not till long afterwards did I know that in the very streets of Adelaide he had met her with Mr. Murray—gay, bright as ever, altogether ignoring any right he had for offence or grievance. No wonder, poor fellow, he returned home even worse than he went—Nina's influence and Nina's witcheries still dominant—and heart and mind sick.

What could I do to help him ? Nothing—absolutely nothing ; I dare not even show the sympathy I felt—he would never bear that upon a subject on which he had always been reserved. I tried to win him to some interest by playing his favourite pieces, or singing his favourite songs, and sometimes, as he lay full length on the sofa in the gloaming, with the dusky shadows filling the rooms, and the cool airs of evening, mingled with the balmy odours of flowers, coming in at the open windows, I thought I did accomplish something—a little easing of the pain, a little winning away of the thoughts that burned too hotly within. It was reward enough for me, after playing quietly for an hour, and ceasing for a moment, to hear him say,—

“ Go on, Bessie dear—if you are not tired.”

I felt, then, that I was helping him ; that there was a soothing, if not a healing power in words and melody.

It was an intensely hot summer that year, I remember. The roses were burnt up on their stems at the window ; and the pathways in the garden carpeted by crisp, prematurely falling leaves. Everything around was brown and sere, excepting the vines and the trees ; and it was refreshing to turn to them in the midst of the heat to have something green for the eye to rest on when the flowers had almost forsaken us.

Ours was a large straggling house, with cool, broad passages. My father had been his own architect, and had built it according to his own theory, in days gone by : and for me it had a quaint beauty which more modern and substantial edifices possessed not. It was eminently cool, too ; for father was skilful in inventions to shut out the heat or admit the cool air, so that we really suffered less from the scorching sun and hot winds than most of our neighbours. Only the burnt-up pasture, brown and sere—excepting where the shadow of a great gum tree had fallen, broad and deep, leaving a green oasis in the dreary waste—told its own tale of the hot parching winds that had passed over them.

A hot parching wind seemed to have passed over my brother, withering up the very life within him. He still went about his work, but no longer with the gay, bright, elastic step, that had been so characteristic of his movements. He was growing thinner, too—for his clothes hung loosely on him, and his languid movements were not less apparent than his failing appetite. They attracted my father's attention at last, as I felt sure they would, for I



had seen him earnestly regarding him more than once.

"Why, Sidney," he exclaimed one evening, as he rose from an almost untouched meal, and sauntered listlessly towards the door, "you seem out of sorts, my boy. I never knew the hot weather knock you up so before."

"Oh! there's not much the matter, father," said Sidney, with a slight flush; "this weather is exceptionally hot—enough to knock up a fellow—and no one cares for eating in a hot wind."

But I remembered the time, and so did father, when hot weather and hot winds had no effect on that young elastic frame and appetite; and we were unconvinced, but nothing more was said, only father continued his observations.

Sidney did not improve either, for as the summer continued its trying heat, he grew more languid; and often passed whole mornings on the cane lounge outside the drawing-room window, where the white jessamine wove its blossoms with the passion-flower, forming a thick and shadowy canopy; and no noise but the distant sound of birds and drowsy hum of insects could disturb him.

"Something is the matter with that boy, and I should like Mortimer to see him," said my father one morning later on, when he happened to be absent from the table. "It's not natural—this falling off of strength and appetite; it's unlike him to leave his work and lounge about, and I don't like his appearance."

"Why do you not consult the doctor at once James?" asked my mother anxiously.

"Why, it's no use ; he won't hear of it ; he says there's nothing in the world the matter, but the heat and laziness ; but I remember his mother, and I dread the symptoms," said my father, rising, with more signs of trouble in his face than he usually suffered to appear.

"See the doctor yourself, and ask him to waylay Sidney, and get hold of his symptoms—not professionally, but in a casual way—he will know how to do it, if you give him a hint," suggested my mother.

I did not wait to hear more, for my worst fears were aroused, and my father's words about my mother's illness, and the same symptoms developing in Sidney, were magnified a thousandfold in my own mind. Away I ran to my own little room, and, closing and locking the door after me, I threw myself upon the floor by the side of the large chair, and, burying my head in the cushions, gave way to an agony of weeping. The whole burden of my cry for a long time was only the words, "My brother ! oh, my brother !" I remembered nothing but my fears—my brother slowly going from me, I to be left behind. The cloud had verily come betwixt, and had gathered in blackness overhead.

For a time only ; then came a little uplifting of the cloud. "What had God promised ?" I lay there, with my head upon the cushions, thinking it all over. Why, He had promised *help* in the time of trouble, and I was forgetting to call upon Him. He had bid me cast my burden upon Him, and had promised to sustain ; and here was I bearing my own burden. Bearing it ? No, but crushed down—prostrated beneath it. Was this as it should be ?

Was this honouring God? Was this taking my Father at His word? I rose and went to the window, and kneeling down upon the broad seat, with my elbows on the sill, looked down upon the broad expanse of vines stretching before me, fresh and beautiful, with abundant promise of fruit—at the spreading peach-trees, with their rosy, downy burden; and, as I looked, the memory of God's goodness came over me like an overwhelming flood.

Good! oh, so good! and so powerful to aid. How could I ever forget that? And then, like a little child, I bowed down head and heart before Him, and told Him all my trouble, reminding Him of His word—how especially He had promised that none should ask anything touching His kingdom, and go unanswered. Ask! yes, I asked with all my mind—with my whole heart—for a blessing on my brother; his health was not all—that, I felt, with God's will, might easily come with his soul's health. My cry was for *light*—that his darkness might be dispelled, that his clouds might pass away, and that the clear, bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness might arise on him without a single cloud betwixt.

I arose reassured and refreshed, wondering, too, that after so many proofs of God's goodness I had so soon forgotten my best friend in my heaviest need. Ah! many a time since have I had the same reason for wondering—

“Have proved myself a learner yet—  
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.”

Well for us that our Saviour can sympathize with us in our infirmities and weaknesses, and is so well



acquainted with our frailties that He knows how to receive and forgive. "We have, verily, not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

My brother was away all the afternoon, and did not return till long after our usual tea-hour. He came in, looking wretchedly worn and ill—worse, I thought, than he had ever looked—and throwing the letters and newspapers upon the table, went languidly out into the verandah to the old cane lounge, and threw himself upon it. I followed him with cushions for his head, and begged him to let me bring him some tea.

"Bring me a glass of milk, if you will, Bessie," he said, trying to rouse himself. "I want nothing else excepting a little music, if it is not too warm for you to play. I should like that better than anything."

I brought him his glass of milk and a few delicate cakes of my own preparing, such as I knew he used to like, and wheeling a small stand to his side where he could easily reach them, I stroked back the hair from his damp brow, and kissed him.

"Bessie, you are the best little sister in the world," he exclaimed, with an answering kiss. And to hide the tears that came to my eyes with those words I threw open the folding glass door, and went straight to the piano.

What should I play? For a time my fingers ran aimlessly about the keys, mingling soft melodies, improvising harmonies; but at length, my whole

mind full of the morning prayer and praise, I played a little running symphony of my own. I improvised both tune and words—singing what, most strangely, I have never since forgotten :—

“There is no darkness that can hide from Thee—  
There is no sorrow but Thy love can see ;  
The pure, bright light of day, the sky serene,  
Shines on unheedful of the clouds between.  
So, Jesus, Thy clear light shall ever shine  
Through every cloud in this poor heart of mine.

“Thou—Thou hast said it, Lord, ‘Let there be light!’  
Those words must dissipate the clouds of night.  
Into the light, dear Jesus, lead us on ;  
Bid every cloud that comes betwixt begone,  
Till all our doubts and darkness fade away,  
And leave us in the light of perfect day.”

My voice fell with the closing words, my fingers trembled on the keys. With those words ringing in my ears I went out into the verandah to my brother's side.

“Into the light, Bessie—always the same theme,” my brother's words came soft and low, but there was a mournful ring with them, and his hand was over his eyes.

“Oh, Sid dear, it's worth searching for,” I answered, with my head slightly resting on his shoulder. “*Our* light, *Jesus*—Himself the light ; to *know* Him, is to come to the light.”

“I know but little of Him, Bessie.”

“Yes, dear Sid, or you would trust Him more. When we know more of Him, the doubt and the darkness goes.”

"My doubts and darkness only thicken, it seems to me."

"Dear Sid ! shall I tell you why ? You try to disperse them by a false light—the light of reason. Try the light of God's Word, and see its power."

"Little Sis, I wish I had your faith. For me 'clouds and darkness are around His throne.' Look here ! read these words"—and he drew back the curtain till the light of the lamp fell full and clear on an open book he held in his hands. He pointed, as he spoke, to some verses in Lamentations, which were doubly underlined—I could not mistake them—as I slowly read,—

"He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.

"He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out : He hath made my chain heavy.

"Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer."

"Is this *all* you have read, dear Sid ?" I asked, with my eyes full of tears.

"Yes ; I have gone no further. Was not that enough ?"

"No !—not enough," I answered, "not when such words as these follow :—

"The Lord is good unto them that *wait* for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.

"It is good that a man should both *hope* and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord."

He took the book from my hand in surprise, to see if indeed the words were there ; then, rising, he went slowly off.



That evening, in turning over the newspapers before putting them away, I came upon this announcement:—

“On the 27th instant, at Glen Linn, the residence of the father of the bride, Allen Murray, Esq., of Allen Grange, to Nina, only daughter of Hugh Templeton, Esq.”

It was all over now; hopes and fears changed to certainty. By the crushed appearance of the paper, I knew that Sidney had seen it.

And in the silence and darkness of my room that night I blessed God and took courage.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### LIGHT WITH BELIEF.

“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me shall not abide in darkness.”—JOHN xii. 46.

THE pillar of cloud—the fiery pillar—guiding, directing the movements of His children. Yes, I remembered and believed, but on what different paths fell the shadow of that cloud. By what devious paths were those wayward people conducted out of darkness into the light. *We* cannot see why the weak should be made strong, and the strong weak. Why thorns and briers should spring up in one path, and roses bestrew every inch of ground for another. After all, if the issue is the same—“into the light”—it matters little the way of the entrance. All must result in perfect bliss.

Looking back on those past years I can realize

that now—can understand that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

The scorching summer had given place to autumn's mellow pleasant days. The vines had lost their fresh greenness, and were resplendent with rich and varied tints of red, and purple, and orange. Yellow leaves were falling from the trees in the orchard, and strewing the ground along the garden paths. The poplars were fast losing their foliage, and adding their quota to the already thick autumnal carpet. Down by the creek the dear old willow was growing bare and leafless, laving its skeleton branches in the darkening waters. I had very seldom ventured beneath its shadow that year. The summer had been exceedingly hot, as I have said,—hot enough indeed to make the cool seat under its green branches very pleasant and inviting; but the heat had developed something else not quite so agreeable. Not only swarms of mosquitoes, but the presence of more than one snake among the grass and reeds at the very spot we used to choose as an evening lounge, effectually drove us away from its vicinity.

Following the summer's heat, the autumn days were delicious, pleasant days of coolness and brightness too, for the garden was gay with late roses and chrysanthemums, and the violets distilled double sweetness under the dewy influences that fell from them after summer's hot winds had done its worst with their spreading leaves. But, alas! those bright days were not bright to me, for the darkness and the cloud still rested on our dwelling, and Sidney, my beloved Sidney, seemed fading away like the leaves.

He did not yield willingly to the weakness ; perhaps it would have been better if he had. He had been accustomed to consider himself so strong, it was hard to relinquish old customs, old habits ; it was hard to allow others to see his weakness. We little knew how *long* he had concealed the critical symptoms now developing, or how much suffering he had kept to himself. He tried to do so still, but his sister's anxious eyes were not here readily deceived.

My father had seen Dr. Mortimer, and the doctor willingly undertook the matter. "I am not at all surprised at what you tell me, though I have not seen your son for some time," he answered, in reply to my father's expressed fears. "I always thought, in spite of manly growth and apparent strength, that certain symptoms which were visible even in the child, before his mother's death, were only dormant, and must eventually show themselves."

"You think there is real disease ?"

"I always did ; nevertheless, the symptoms you mention are of so grave a nature that there must have been some cause to develop them. Has your son had any unusual excitement, or troubles, during the last few months ?"

"Not that I'm aware of. He is particularly reticent respecting his affairs and doings, and always has been, from a boy. However, I have every confidence in you, doctor, and shall leave it in your hands to discover what is really the matter with him. Cure him, if you can ; we can't spare him." And my father turned away with tears in his eyes, which only I could see.



Heart disease ! And so this was the end of all my happy hopes for my brother ! I shut myself in my room again, and lay prostrate on the floor a long time, unable to yield him up. "Was heart disease ever cured ? I thought not, but I had heard that people suffering from this disease sometimes lived for years ; and why not dear Sid ?" This thought revived me again. Oh ! if God would only spare him ; that together we might walk in the light, and rejoice.

At any rate, Dr. Mortimer had not given any definite opinion. Had he asked me, and had I dared to betray my brother's secret, I could have told the exciting cause of all his illness. Perhaps the doctor would find out for himself ; perhaps the symptoms would pass away, and not prove so very grave after all. I had to leave it thus. So far as medical knowledge could go, I was not content to *rest* in that.

No ! for this life was not all. What a little space it seemed when compared with eternity ; and our minds are so weak—they can only grasp the finite. We want faith to look into the eternity, where perfect light alone exists.

This life was not all. I dearly wanted my brother's companionship in the pure light, which can make earth lovely, even under any circumstances ; but, beyond all, did I long that the life to come, the everlasting light, might be his.

We had to wait some time before the doctor had any tidings to tell us ; the wished-for opportunity was slow in coming. It came at last, when it was least expected. One afternoon, when my brother was out on the farm superintending the fresh roofing

of a barn, an accident happened to a workman, who, missing a round of the ladder, slipped and fell heavily to the ground. Sidney immediately resorted to the readiest means—untied his neckcloth, and applied water to his head—for he was unconscious. He was still supporting the man, when the doctor, who had been hastily summoned, arrived; and applying proper remedies, and finding that no serious injury was done, ordered him to be quietly taken home. He had just given these orders when, turning to announce his opinion to Sidney, he discovered him leaning against the wall, pale, livid, and gasping, and unable to speak. The paroxysm passed in a moment, but it was enough, and confirmed the doctor's worst fears. There was no need for concealment now, and so poor Sidney admitted that he had had several of these attacks during the last few months—one particularly bad one when in Adelaide. That, suspecting the cause, he had consulted a medical man, and learnt that the seat of the evil was the heart, that the paroxysm was brought on by excitement, and that the result must ultimately prove fatal, if all exciting causes were not avoided.

It was all out now. We all knew what there was to dread, and the only good of the knowledge was that the doctor might administer relief, and teach us what to do on the recurrence of any attack. But, oh, how my heart yearned over my brother; how I longed to know whether he was trying the light of God's Word to disperse his doubts; whether, indeed, his very trouble was drawing him into the light, after which he was so blindly searching.

It was some days after this that one evening, just as the shadows were deepening over the garden, and the faint light of the rising moon threw its illumination among the leaves above us, that Sidney lay on his cane lounge in the verandah, and I sat beside him, with my work idly in my lap, and my hands folded above it, for it was too dark to see the stitches.

The day had been hot and trying—for even some of autumn's days are so. Sidney had especially felt it, for he had made no effort to go out, and had kept in his room the greater part of the afternoon. With the falling shadows a west wind had set in, bringing a pleasant change, and we were in our usual places to enjoy it. We were quite undisturbed there. My father and mother chose the sitting-room, with its large open windows. Gussy was driving out with the elder children and their governess. The little ones were in bed, so no one came to intrude upon us.

We had been sitting very quietly for some time; indeed, in the increasing dusk I could not be quite certain whether my brother was sleeping or not. I was a little startled, therefore, when he suddenly exclaimed,—

“*You had not long to wait for the light, Bessie; it seemed to come to you very soon. How was it?*”

“It came with the *belief*, dear Sid,” I replied, my heart giving a sudden leap, for I knew he was referring to our last conversation on the subject, and the words in Lamentations—“It is good for a man that he should both *hope* and quietly *wait* for the salvation of the Lord.” “Yes,” I continued, “I remember



it very well. The light was from the cross. Oh, how the darkness fell away, and I seemed to see on that cross *Jesus*, dying for *my* sins, life everlasting purchased by His death for *me*. Ah, Sid, and for you, too!"

"It has been very heavy darkness with me, Bessie; darkness that might be felt," he presently said, in a low voice. "I could not see my hand before me; the more I searched, the darker it grew. The *book* was a sealed book to me for a long time."

"But it is not so *now*, dear Sid?" I returned, with a flash of joy, eagerly catching at the hope his words suggested. "It is not *now* all darkness?"

I had put my hand upon his, as it lay listlessly beside him, in my eagerness for an answer. He took it in both his.

"No, Sis, not all darkness; there is a glimmering of light, and it came from these words—'In the hands of a Mediator.' Have you ever noticed them?"

I never had, and I said so—glad, rejoicing, yet wondering how he had come into the light through such words as these.

"Don't you remember, Sis, what I once told you, that I could not understand how Christ's death could cancel my sins, that I felt that I must do something *myself*?"

"Yes." I remembered very well, and listened with beating heart for more.

"I told you, too, that I made no headway, and for a time I gave it all up, put the thought from me, resolved to let things go." He paused for a moment,

for the memory of that time was still very bitter to him, and my own eyes were wet with tears as I quietly pressed his hand in sympathy.

"I fought against the light, Sis ; it was revealing me to myself in a way at which my pride rebelled. I found I could not justify myself in the light of a holy God, do what I might ; that when I would do good, evil was present with me. And so I threw it off ; I would search no more. I made up my mind that there was no use in troubling about it."

He was silent so long that I began to fear he had nothing more to tell me ; so, though my tears were flowing, I presently managed to say,—

"That was only for a time, Sid ?"

"For a good long time—a space of months—I rebelled against the light ; I tried to hide myself in the darkness. I might have been doing so still. Well, let that pass. The way has been sharp and rough, but, Bessie dear, I believe I can see the light at last."

"Oh, Sid ! dear Sid ! I knew you would." It was all I could exclaim. And he presently went on,—

"After two or three of these attacks, which I so carefully concealed from you all, though I could not the effects that followed, and which you know all about now, the thirst for the light returned—for it was a *thirst*—more like that than anything I know of. I could no longer remain satisfied to let things go on as they were. Life might end at any moment ; the uncertainty was something terrible. Bessie, the struggle after light was almost more than I could bear, yet I could not talk of it even to you."

"And then?" I asked, sick at heart with the consciousness of what all this must have been to him, and yet trembling with a hope of what was yet to come. "And then, dear Sid?"

"*In the hands of a Mediator,*" he answered, his voice changing to a low, restful tone, "that is where I have at last placed myself. He will advocate my cause; I leave myself with *Him*. I found it all out at last, Bessie; and now, as I think of it," he said, his voice gaining in confidence as he spoke, "it is clear enough how Christ—the God-Man, the 'days-man'—stands between our sins and God's justice—how through Him we may be justified. It's a new light, a new revelation of the Cross to me. 'There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,' as Paul has it in his Epistle to Timothy. Oh, it's clear as day."

"And oh, Sidney, how beautiful! '*In the hands of a Mediator.*' And what a Mediator!" I exclaimed with trembling joy, for he indeed—my brother, my beloved brother—had come into the light at last, and what revelations it was making to him of Christ and His love and power.

"I see it all now," he continued; "how *works* can never justify a man, for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law of Moses.' This curse Christ bore for us when He died on the cross. 'He was made a curse for us.' He mediates the cause of all who believe in Him. In the hands of this Mediator, Bessie, it is all right for time and for eternity."

His voice was growing weak from the very inten-



sity of his emotion, and presently, kissing me, he rose, and said he thought he would go to bed. "You may bring me my potion presently, dear—if you will—and see that I am all right; but, darling, don't be afraid, I am happier to-night than I have ever been in my life; it seems as if the light was just shining down into my soul."

I could not sleep that night; I lay awake, my heart divided between joy and sorrow: joy because my prayers were answered, the *light had come*—had burst aside the clouds, scattering them right and left, and my brother was basking in the full light of the cross. The sorrow, and the fear, and the trembling was for myself, lest but for a little while this dear, this precious brother was to be left with me. And this, how hard it seemed to me!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE PERFECTION OF LIGHT.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—REV. xxi. 22.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."—REV. xxii. 5.

I THINK it is Peter, in his first epistle, who, warm, enthusiastic, burning with holy fire, as he considered the greatness of the position to which the people of God were called—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"—tells

them that they are thus chosen that they may "show forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His *marvellous light*."

Days passed after that happy evening, signalized by my brother's entrance into this light. It seemed as if the darkness had indeed passed, and the beautiful, clear, beaming light illumined all things within and without. Not that my brother's physical condition was better; alas! too certainly it was not so. Whether it was the effects of growing weakness, or the natural consequence of the rapid progress of the peculiar form of his disease, I do not know; but he no longer made any effort to resume his usual occupation. Evidently with the absence of the necessity for concealment had ceased the power to do so. There were days in which he suffered little but weakness; but there were others marked by alternate attacks of agonizing pain—a sudden fainting, alarming in the last degree, and all the doctor could do was to soothe or mitigate the suffering. We knew that the end must come, how soon we could not tell.

But the *light* shone through all the suffering and the pain, and in those days I had my beloved brother much to myself. He liked to have me near him; we understood a language with which, at that time, no one else in our household was familiar. My father came in and out with his sorrowful eyes, feeling, I knew, to the full the bitterness of losing his first-born, and his helplessness to relieve; wondering, too, at the light that shone upon his countenance, even after a paroxysm of pain, and at the words that fell from his

lips of that Mediator of whose marvellous love his whole heart was full.

And now *I* was the learner, the recipient; for Sidney's faith rose higher and shone brighter than mine, as though some of the golden light from the celestial city had already touched him with its beams. The cross for him was glory-crowned. He had discovered the key to its mysteries, and he basked in the light with the holy joy of one who had found a treasure.

Where were the *doubts* and the *darkness* gone? Gone before the light of that cross. He had come to *Christ*. The light, and believing in Him, could no longer abide in darkness. A *marvellous* light was it? Ah me, the change was as great as from night to morning.

Autumn days were waning to a close; the mornings and the evenings were growing chilly and damp. There were already intervals of rainy days, and the garden paths were heavy and dank with fallen leaves. We could seldom sit out of doors now—only indeed in the middle of the day, when the sun came out warmly for a time, and rendered it safe or pleasant. Over-ripe grapes still hung their desolate clusters here and there among the discoloured leaves of the vines, but even these were passing, leaving bare stems behind them. The flower garden had still its bright spots—a few monthly roses, scarlet geranium, and flaunting chrysanthemum reigned dominant. But the rain was putting fresh life into the herbage, and the evergreen shrubs were wonderfully flourishing beneath its influence. The lawn was becoming velvety in its softness.



We chiefly occupied the same dear little sitting-room that had been assigned to me in my former illness, looking full upon the loveliest part of the garden—the flower-bordered lawn. We saw nothing of bare vines, or discoloured leaves, or wet leaf-strewn paths, for the gardener's hand was visible—clearing, and tying up, and clipping; so that even amidst the falling rain there was something pleasant to look upon,—and the range of hills beyond was glorious always.

Sidney loved that room. It was a little sanctuary to us both. But it was strange to see him where I had been, seated in the large easy-chair, wrapped in a loose coat, which day by day hung more loosely on him; or lying on the deep, old, spring-cushioned couch while I read to him, or talked, just as he was inclined; or sat and worked by his side while he slept.

I remember one afternoon he had been lying listening to me as I read from a volume of Bonar's poems. It was raining without, but the fire shone brightly upon the hearth, with its cheery little jets of flame; and the couch had been wheeled round so that he could watch the blaze, while I read. I had opened last upon some verses I had never seen before. We both felt as though it was expressly for us:—

“Light has arisen—we walk in its brightness;  
Joy has descended—its fulness has come;  
Peace has been spoken—we hear it, we take it;  
Angels are singing, and shall we be dumb?

“Happy in Him who has loved us and bought us,  
Rich in the life which He gives to His own;  
Fill'd with the peace passing all understanding,  
Never less lonely than just when alone.

"Safe in His strength—in His love ever happy—  
What are the tremblings and tossings of time?  
Firm in His grace, to His arm ever clinging,  
Upwards, still upwards, we buoyantly climb."

We sat silent a few moments after I had ceased reading, full of the beauty of the words; and each of us taking in their meaning for ourselves. The afternoon was waning and was unusually dark—so dark that I could with difficulty see to read the last words. The logs on the fire had softly fallen together, sending forth a flood of ruddy flame; the rich, warm light danced on the walls, and lighted up the letters on the backs of the books, throwing a soft radiance over my favourite, "John the beloved." It fell also on my brother's couch, but his face was left in shadow—I could not see whether he was asleep or awake, till he softly said,—

"Bessie, it must be very pleasant to be permitted to work for such a Master."

"Oh, Sidney! Yes," I answered, with bated breath, "a pleasure and an honour."

"Having come 'into the light' one's self, you know, to be permitted to lead others into it," he continued sadly. "Little Sis, I fear this service is denied me; I have entered upon it so late."

"They also serve who only stand and wait, dear Sid," I tearfully replied. "God accepteth according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not; and, Sid dear, you cannot tell what work our dear Lord may give you to do yet, and at any rate it must be as He wills it."

"Yes, I know that, Bessie; I am content to rest

in His hands, and to do all according to His will. Content? eh, more than content—it is happiness to resign one's self into His hands, and feel that all He does is well."

I was crying quietly now, but he caught sight of my bowed head, and called me to him.

"Tears, Bessie!" he exclaimed, drawing down my head to his shoulder, and fondly stroking my hair. "I want *you* to feel how well it is with me whatever happens, dear. I wish I could prove to you what it is to me to have come into the light, and how clear that light is. I think you would not be afraid for your brother then."

"Oh, Sid, I am not afraid—it is not that."

"I know, I know," he answered gently; "but, Bessie, at worst it will be but for a little time; we shall have an eternity to spend together. If rest is given to me and *work* for you, dear, there will be *light* for the work. You have not to bear your own burden, remember that."

I vainly tried to speak, so he presently went on,—

"You must take Gussy under your loving care; he need's a sister's help—he is so impulsive, so easily led away. He is a rough diamond needing a little polish, but I have strong hope for him. We have had several talks together lately. He is thinking. You must try to help him to work the thoughts out."

"Sidney dear, *you* will help me?" I faltered, with that indefinite feeling of coming sorrow for which I could scarcely account.

"Yes, dear, when I can; but the time may be



short, Bessie, and I like to speak while I have the opportunity. I want you to know, too, that while I have left the greatest portion of my land to Gussy, I have settled all dear mother's money upon *you*. Do you understand me, dear?"

"Oh, Sidney, don't!"

He was silent for a little. We were almost in darkness, for the flame had died out, and only the red glow of the ashes remained. The bitter tears would come, though I tried to keep them back, for I was afraid they would trouble him; but though trembling with fear, of what I scarcely knew, I managed presently to say,—

"Do you feel worse to-night, dear Sidney?"

"Worse? No, dear; only realizing a little more of the bright shining which makes earth look dim by the contrast," he replied cheerfully. "You do not grudge me a *near approach* to the '*perfection of light*,' dear Bessie, do you?"

"No, dear Sid. Only I wish to go with you."

"Ah, Bessie, I think you are wanted here yet. Your light has some dark places to shine in; let it burn brightly for Jesus. There is dear father and Gussy, and the rest. We don't want to leave them in the darkness. Maybe, when I am gone, they will think more of the few words I have been able to utter. For me it has been written: '*At evening time it shall be light*'—not the evening time of years, but of *life*. Bless God for the light whenever He sends it!"

We sat silently together in the darkness for some minutes longer; then, startled by the increasing quiet

I rose to put the fire together, and light the lamp. I came back then again to his side, to look at my brother. He was lying very quietly with his eyes closed, but there was a deep pallor on his brow and dark shadows round his eyes, that betrayed exhaustion. With no other fear than this I exclaimed,—

“I must give you your medicine, dear Sid,” and bending down to kiss him, turned away to get his draught. As I did so my father entered the room.

“I have been walking up and down the verandah, and wondered when you were going to light the lamp,” he said. “Sid, my boy,” he continued, turning towards the couch, “I wanted to consult you—” He stopped suddenly, and went nearer. “Why Bessie, child, your brother has fainted!” and he seized the medicine from my hands.

Fainted! ah, no. This time it was no faint. I might have known that earth was indeed growing dim to him, because of the exceeding brightness of the light from the celestial city—the city that “needeth no candle, nor the light of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof.” My brother! oh, my brother! he had left us without a sign, without a sigh. The perfection of light was his for ever!

I do not know how I lived through that night. I could not realize that the end had indeed come. I could not realize that no longer I should have my beloved one to share my sorrows and my joys; and I could not at once discern the loving hand that had so gently taken him to Himself, away from all the darkness and gloom, and mists of this earth—through which, sometimes, the light even of that

glorious city breaks so dimly. *I* was left behind; that was all *I* could, for a time, comprehend. And my head and heart were bowed down together.

They took me away from home; my dear father was all goodness and kindness to me. He sought, by change of scene and sea voyages, to restore my sinking energies. For a time the clouds came very thickly over the sky. *I* refused to be comforted.

It was my father's words at last brought me to see that *I* was rebelling against my best Friend. "Bessie," he said, quietly and sadly, as he sat in the window of a hotel at St. Kilda one evening, looking out upon the sea, "Was all that once made you so happy mere sentiment? Has the light gone?—is nothing left?"

"Oh, father—No! *I* am weak and sinful. Jesus still lives; He is the light! Somehow *I* have forgotten. *I* will forget no more."

And the next day we went quietly on board the steamer, and back to our home; *I*, to take up my mission, to shine for Jesus—to show that the light was unchanged, eternal!



## PART II.

# WALKING IN THE LIGHT.

“Having received Christ, so walk ye in Him.”

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### CHAPTER I.

#### TAKING UP THE THREAD.

“Walk in the light . . . have fellowship one with another.”  
1 JOHN i. 7.

SIDNEY, my beloved brother, was slumbering in the little graveyard. One would think, indeed, that I only thought of him as *there*, and not that he had entered into the joy of his Lord, and was dwelling in the city of light that “needeth no candle—neither the light of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof.” I had been dwelling on my loss, not his gain, and thence my over-much sorrow. And all these six weeks of absence I had gone about with bowed head and heart, as if there was no light, no more light for me. No wonder my father’s words cut keenly, when at last he said so quietly, and yet so sadly, as we sat together in the balcony of our hotel at St. Kilda, “Was all that made you so happy mere sentiment? Has the light gone?—is nothing left?” No wonder that I responded, ashamed to think how I had been dishonouring my Lord,—

"No, father, no! I am weak and sinful. Jesus still lives; He is the light! Somehow I have forgotten. I will forget no more."

And the next day we went quietly on board the steamer, and back to Adelaide.

Over no smooth sea I came back with my father, to home and the duties awaiting me there. We had a rough and wild passage; fierce winds and tumultuous waves tossed our little vessel, sending it rudely on its homeward track. But it was homeward that every surge of the billows, every blast of the tempest that racked us through and through, most truly bore us. There was comfort in the knowledge that each heaving wave was only bringing us nearer port, and as I lay in my berth, exhausted by the conflict above and below me, I was comforted exceedingly by the remembrance of that other "sweet, sweet home," towards which every sorrow, every grief, like those rough winds, were as surely bearing us.

But my father's words—so quiet, yet so sharp a reproof to this sinful yielding of continued sorrow—still rang in my ears. What had I been doing all these past weeks, that he should have to ask those sad questions? He well might think my former happiness had been mere sentiment; how had I shown that it was not so? Poor old father! that he should have had to carry his own heavy grief alone, and without that hope which ought to have made me rejoice, or, at the least, should have chastened my sorrow. No, the light was not gone, it was only obscured for awhile—Jesus was left, Jesus and His love! How I longed to say all this to my father!

But saying was not enough; in verity, by act and deed, I must shine for Jesus, and prove that His love is all-sufficient both for this life and the life to come.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" The words came over and over again to my memory, though I could not imagine where I had read them. Again and again they returned—the command and the reason given for that command—and to *me!*

Arise! Yes, I had been down long enough in the dust, the wings of my faith sadly drooping; it must be so no longer. Arise, shine! That was what I had to do, even though the little light I emitted might only emulate the scintillation of the glowworm. I was to shine, to help to brighten the dark places, to testify to the light, and wherefore? Because His light had come to me—the light that is the light of life—and the glory of it had arisen upon me!

I lay tossing about in my berth with every motion of the tempestuous waves, but it was no longer in gloom or darkness. My sorrow for the loss of my brother had not gone, but the light had come from behind the cloud, and the *shadow* of the grave had passed, for it was illumined by His glory.

And so, when our voyage was nearly ended and I stood on the deck beside my father, my hand on his arm, quietly looking out upon the old familiar shores and watching the waves—that, robbed of half their violence, were still foam-crested and heaving, bearing us swiftly to our haven—he looked contentedly into my face, and smiling, said,—

"Why, Bessie, my child, the storm has done you



good; this face is more like my little girl's of old time—my little sunbeam!"

"The light has not gone, papa," I answered softly, so glad to be able to testify to its influence.

So at last we were nearing home. I would not stop to think what it would be to me without dear Sid, how I must miss him through the day, and how I should vainly listen for his voice. We who had been so much to each other, whom circumstances had united more close, and more closely still that band of union that lay between us as "children of the light" over which death had no power. I tried to brace myself up with the remembrance of these things and of Sid's happiness. There was, I knew, no more sin or suffering for him; joy alone, and that eternal! He was basking in the full light now, no longer subject to the clouds that come between; for him there was no more cloud!

I kept, as I said, these thoughts before me all the way of our home journey, and I think that father had no reason to complain of his daughter's lack of cheerfulness. Hitherto, I felt, I had been selfish in my sorrow. It must not be so any more. God helping me, I would throw myself into my duties, and help to make bright the home that was still left to me.

We had been absent six weeks, and I knew father was very anxious to get home. Autumn had been succeeded by the early days of winter. There was evidence of his presence as we rode along on either hand. Rain had fallen heavily, filling the ruts with water and swelling the creeks to overflowing. In one place, near home, a small bridge had been completely

washed away, necessitating our taking a long round, and thus lengthening our journey. That did not seem in the least to trouble my father; indeed, to my surprise, he rather eagerly turned into the long route, without a single regret for the fallen bridge. There was a quiet look of satisfaction on his face, which did not become clear to me till long after. On the old route we must have passed the little churchyard in which our precious ones were lying. Dear father, it seems, had been thinking for many a mile how he could avoid this without apparent design. The flood had decided the matter for him.

As we drew nearer and nearer the house, for the moment the memory of that far-off home-coming with Sid, on our return from the "Nest," came almost too forcibly. And yet, then the trees were full of bud and blossom, and the air fragrant with spring flowers. Now the wind howled through the leafless branches, whirling the dry leaves along, hustling them to the sides of the road, where they lay in heaps, mementoes of a past summer.

It was rather a dreary prospect certainly, and scarcely calculated to raise the spirits; but as we came to the end of the avenue, and in sight of the house, there was a little parting of the clouds in the west, and for a few brief moments the setting sun burst forth through its misty curtains, and sent a flood of wavering light over the whole front of the house, illuminating the windows with a pale glory that was very beautiful. To me it brought a word of cheer—Christ, the Light, still lived, and no cloud, whether of sin or suffering, could withstand the glo-

rious flood of His clear shining. I was not going into the gloom and darkness, but into the pure light of His presence. And all the light I had, all the light I could diffuse, must come *first* from Him.

As we drove up to the door the light was already fading. The sun had set, but there came a warm, cheerful glow through the dining-room windows and the open hall door, where mamma and the children were all waiting impatiently for us; Gussy was standing on the steps, and sprang forward eagerly to my side to lift me from the buggy.

"Glad to get you back, Bessie!" he exclaimed with a significant hug.

"Have you wanted me, Gussy?" as he took my shawl from my arms, and ushered me in.

"Wanted is not the name for it!" he returned heartily. "Anyhow I'm glad you are here—it will seem a little more like home now." And he went back with my father to remove the rest of the luggage, while I ran up the steps to be received with new welcomes and acclaim by mamma and the children and servants.

As I stood at last in my own room, surrounded by the old familiar objects, such a tide of recollection came over me that I was nearly breaking down altogether. Fortunately the remembrance of my father's words, and the presence of Maude and Lillie, who were busy with their assistance, roused me to a sense of what was done; and of what lay before me. I had already given way enough to grief, sorrowed almost as though there had been no hope in dear Sidney's death; and yet I knew it was not so, that no darkness could come over him any more.



Yes, I believed in this fully; but that was not sufficient—I had to show that I believed in it. Having come into the light myself, I must walk in it so that others might believe. Single-handed it was a hard thing to do. Alone, how was I to grapple with the powers of darkness that were arrayed against me? Alone! No, I was not alone; God was all-sufficient, and my sufficiency was in Him.

All this passed through my mind as my young sisters were busy removing my things, and chatting about some point of great interest to themselves.

“Such wonderful news!” I found at last that Maude was saying—“Bessie, do you hear? Mamma has had letters by the English mail, and has been only watching for papa to come home to tell us all about them.”

“What is it all about, Maudie?” I asked, suddenly recovering my powers of attention.

“Ah! we don’t know anything for certain yet,” said Maude mysteriously. “It is something at any rate that has made mamma glad and sorry and excited all at once. But she won’t tell us what it is. She says papa must know first, and that he will have to decide.”

“Yes,” chimed in Lillie, “and it’s something to do with money, I think, from mamma’s relations in England, and it concerns her and all us children, though I don’t see how it is that you and Gussy and Jemmy are out of it. But I expect we shall have to wait till morning to hear the rest.”

“Yes,” I returned, smiling, “for papa is tired and will want his tea, and rest. We will not keep him waiting; so come, dears, I am ready.”

"And I should think you must be tired and hungry, after such a rough voyage. But you don't look like it," said Maude.

I felt like it, whatever I looked. I was tired at least, and glad to be off the sea. I was tired of its weary tossing and tumbling; but, on the other hand, I was not quite prepared for the confusion of tongues that followed, and I had not quite toned down to the enjoyment of a high tea. They were, however, all so kind, and so glad to see me, and had so many interesting tales of local news to relate, that I roused myself as much as possible, and succeeded very fairly; so much so, that when we separated for the night, Gussy put his arm round my shoulder, and giving me, what he never used to do—a good-night kiss—once more said how jolly it was to have me back, adding that he had all sorts of little jobs awaiting me, saved up against my return, which nobody else could or would do.

It was a good beginning, and a hopeful one. It introduced me to a part of the work that lay before me. If I could but influence my young brother for good, what a joy it would be! His very loneliness had drawn him nearer to me.

I went to bed with a little more insight into what the future had for me. I had all the old threads of work to take up and to interweave them with the new; old duties and new ones to combine. But I was not required to take up the work of the morrow *to-day*. I had been brought safely over a stormy sea, and now I might rest. The hand that had guided me hitherto would guide and help me still. I need not fear, only trust.

And so at last, wearied out by my voyage and the efforts I had made to be cheerful and bright, I laid my head upon my pillow, thankful for the past, hopeful for the future. I slept a long, deep sleep of entire repose.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST LOOK ROUND.

“Believing in the light.”—JOHN xii. 36.

BARE branches and a cloudy sky ! That was what I looked out upon from my bedroom window, as I rolled up the blind and put aside the curtain, and stood for a few moments looking out. It was home in its wintry aspects—but home still, even though dear Sidney was absent. I had still to live on just as long as my Heavenly Father appointed ; still a round of duties to perform, new or old, as hitherto.

Bare branches and a wintry sky ! Yes, but the sun was behind the clouds and there were buds in the bare branches, and cloudy skies betokened fructifying rain, the bud and the blossom and the fruit would all succeed in good time.

Meanwhile, I had simply to go on, day by day, taking up my loose, neglected threads of work or thought, and weaving them slowly in. I was young yet. I had gained strength and health during my absence from home, and something more of hopefulness was springing up in my heart as I stood looking out upon the dry withered leaves that strewed the garden paths, and the great bushes of chrysanthemums, yellow and white and purple, in every shade or tint, which were already fading and dark, under the in-



fluence of cold and rain and wintry storms. They had blossomed splendidly, but their bloom was spent; the gardener had already condemned them. Well, but there would be a new season of bloom for these by-and-by. The dear old garden would renew its beauty, and so there might be hope and even joy for me in the future, for I was, as I said, still young, only one-and-twenty, and with the world before me, and I had given myself to Him in whom is no darkness at all.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come!" Again came those stirring words to my memory, and a thrill of joy even then ran through me at the recollection that all my light, all my warmth was derived, not from within, but from without; from the Sun of Righteousness, whose rays brought healing and health.

It was early yet; and only the servants were up, and maybe Gussy. My father was getting old, and was no longer an early riser, nor, indeed, was it necessary that he should be. I was glad to be alone, for I wanted the first look round by myself entirely. I wanted to familiarize myself with the old things and the old places, and with the absence of one with whom they were all associated.

I turned slowly into our cosy dining-room. I had been there the night before, and had noticed no particular difference there. There was the same crimson carpet, with its intertwining leaves of deeper hue, stretching over the whole length of the floor; the same fine old tiger couchant hearthrug—large and soft, my delight from childhood—before a fire of soft

glowing coals, with a large log for a background, which was pleasant to see on such a winter morning as this. There was nothing new here, save the customary changes—the substitution of the crimson damask curtains for the lace, which threw a warm flush over the room where the wintry sunshine stole in. There was plenty of light, for the windows were large, and looked out on an open part of the garden, where the lawn spread widely, and the flower borders lay back, and a distant peep of the hills broke through the intervening shrubbery. Here the grass was still green and smoothly shaven, for our gardener was proud of his lawns, and took pleasure in the culture and pruning of shrubs and hedges. It was my father's taste, however, that had opened up the vista through which those hills became visible, at the cost, indeed, of a few fine shrubs, but wonderfully compensating by what was revealed.

Those hills, as I looked at them, reminded me of the "celestial hills," for the sun coming out from behind a cloud was throwing a veil of glory over them. I was glad they were there; the everlasting hills; they spoke of stability amidst a world of change; they rested me.

I passed out into the parlour. There had been a few changes here; a slight moving of the furniture, a little rearrangement; nothing else besides the winter's change of drapery, and bright wool antimacassars instead of the lace and muslin of the summer. Outside the window there was indeed *one* change—the old cane lounge had been removed, dear Sidney's lounge, and a handsome new one occupied its place.

My eyes filled with tears, and hastily turning away, I slowly walked down the hall, and through the heavy green-baize doors, and stood on the threshold of the little room sacred with so many memories, all associated with my beloved brother. How could I endure the recollections that that room must bring? And yet I felt it would be better for me to familiarize myself at once with the sight. So, with trembling, reluctant tread, I pushed open the half-closed door.

This the room? No, surely I had made a mistake? Not a vestige of the old furniture. Carpets, window drapery—all changed—bright light, gleaming here and there with dashes of gold—a pretty mixture indeed of drab and blue and gold. The very wall-paper corresponded; the shelves of the bookcase had the same drapery and fringe; not a thing was left to remind me of what had been. Yes, there were the pictures; that was out of deference to papa, of course; but dear St. John, how strange he looked in his new setting; I could scarcely recognize him through my tears.

Mamma's doing—I knew that at once; it was like her. She could not endure sorrow or gloom; she hated what she called "morbid memories." "It was enough," she said, "that sickness and death must come; and to perpetuate the gloom they brought was folly." And so she set to work to alter and change, to obliterate all painful recollections, to stamp out the grief, if possible, by fresh surroundings—bright, and new, and glistening.

Poor mamma! would she always be thus able to put away the shadow of the grave from her by such



light means ? What if it came nearer home ; what if it touched one of her own little ones ? What if it came nearer still and chilled her own life ?

“ False fire ! ” I thought sorrowfully ; “ no substitute for the true light, which has no shadow of darkness upon it. There was One, and only One, who had illumined the tomb and dispelled its blackness.”

Poor little room ! everything so changed. It was pretty, too, prettier far than before, but all the old associations were gone. The old sofa on which dear Sidney had died, the large easy chair which both he and I had found so comfortable in sickness, the little table that had held the fruit, or flowers, or medicine—all gone ; and where ?

I asked the question of the servant, who was passing at the time and who had paused a moment to close the door, not knowing I was there.

“ They have all been sold,” she answered. “ Missus thought it time that the room should be new furnished, for it would be nice and bright for spring. And it do look nice, don’t it, miss ? ” she added, with admiring glances.

“ Yes, Annie,” I answered, in a low tone, “ but I liked the old room best—just as it was.” And closing the door softly behind me, I took down my old hat and a warm wool wrap from a peg in the hall, and walked away into the garden.

I could breathe there, and shed as many tears as I liked, unnoticed.

“ No matter,” I thought, “ Sid, dear Sid ! I shall never forget you. Maybe it is as well that I should have less to remind me of the pain and the sorrowing

here, so that I may look beyond and remember that sorrow and pain are over, and the joy and the perfect bliss remain."

That thought gave a new impetus to my footsteps. After all, perhaps this sweeping removal that had caused me such keen pain, this displacing of all that could recall the time of sickness, especially the last sad scene of all, was good for me; perhaps mamma thought it so, for neither that day nor any other time did she refer to the change. It was not her policy so to do, and I could not have spoken of it. I knew that I had been sinfully indulging in sorrow. Now there was renewed action and life before me. If ever my father needed his "sunbeam," it was now. If ever Gussy required a sister's help and companionship, it was in these days of his early manhood, just when home life must seem very lonely to him, and friends without most luring.

I walked up and down with quickened footsteps till I brought the blood freely circulating through my veins, and the elastic rebound to my step. By the time the breakfast bell rang I was myself again, and went into the midst of the gathering group with a smile upon my lips and a colour in my cheek, which my father welcomed as healthful and hopeful signs, for as he kissed me, he laid his hand on my head, with a low-spoken "Bless you, my child," that did me good.

It was an exciting breakfast to us all; for now that mamma had quietly talked over her English letters with my father, she revealed their contents to us. They created quite a ferment. Maude and

Lillie especially could scarcely be restrained, even by the presence of their governess, from giving expression to the wild delight at the new prospects awaiting them.

For Lillie's surmises were right; the news was mainly to do with money. The death of an aunt, of whom mamma had known little, as she had long been estranged from the family, had suddenly made her the heiress of a large annual income; but, to obtain this, it was necessary that she should at once proceed to England, and of course the children could not be left behind; they must go too, and their governess, who was only too happy to accompany them.

But how about father? I saw that he was looking grave, and that his gravity decidedly affected mamma, as from time to time she glanced at him. He had seen the letters and knew every circumstance respecting them; knew that his wife's presence in England was imperative, not only in her own interests, but in those of others. About his own going he had not been quite so sure. He had evidently reasons for thinking that an impossibility.

And so, when the children and their governess left the room, and Gussy and I were alone with mamma and my father, he presently said,—

"You will have to take this voyage without me, Milly. It is as I feared; it would be as foolish for me to go as it is necessary for you."

"Well, but you have not seen the doctor yet, Mr. Bruce," said mamma in surprise. "It is for him to decide that matter; you know, you agreed to that."



"Yes, and I *have* seen him," replied my father gravely. "I rode down to Dr. Mortimer's before breakfast, since there was so little time for useless delay, and I find it is as I feared. He tells me that I should not live through the voyage, while on land I may have several years before me. So you see, my dear," he added, "for the sake of you all it would be useless running the risk. I do not, however, see why you should burden yourself with all the children," he concluded.

"Oh, yes, I must take them all, I could not be happy without them," cried mamma. "Besides, I want their aunts to see them; they may not have another chance. It may be for their future benefit, you know, James."

My father shook his head sadly. "Well," he said, with a sigh, "it has to be, I suppose; but a year of absence is a long time."

"Oh, it will soon pass, and it could not be done in less time; of course, you know that, my dear? I shall be all the better and stronger for the change, no doubt. You will be glad of that, will you not?"

She looked better already: a very pretty, graceful little woman, with just that shade of delicacy that was infinitely becoming to her. She was many years younger than my father, and there were only a few, a very few, between her and my sister Jenny, and they had unfortunately never fraternized in any respect. Still, we had all got on without any serious disagreement; indeed, on the contrary, we had all agreed remarkably well, all things considered, and I blamed myself for experiencing no sorrow at the

thought of the coming voyage, or rather at the sudden thrill of joy that came with the recollection that for a long twelve months I should have Gussy and my father entirely to myself.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CHAOS OF PREPARATION.

“Walking in wisdom towards those that are without.”

COL. iv. 5.

“It had to be!” That was my father’s verdict ; there was no use in setting his face against it when it was inevitable. To Gussy and me the fact that there was anything the matter with him was so entirely unsuspected that it came upon us like a shock. As to mamma—after the first few moments of regret that his health would not allow him to accompany her, she seemed to forget it altogether, and to revel in the thought of the thorough change that awaited her. The voyage home and the re-visiting the old scenes of her childhood, the very arrangements of that voyage and its varied equipments were entered into with a zest that seemed to restore half her youth again, and much of her beauty. In a little time she appeared to be quite unconscious of my father’s pain, or of anything, indeed, but the brilliant prospects that were awaiting her and her children.

Maude and Lillie entered wildly into the excitement ; and it was well that lessons were shortened, for the manifold preparations that were going on took

their governess into the vortex, for it was fully decided that Miss Upton should go with them, since father could not, and she also had her outfit to prepare; though, I believe, my father's liberality made it comparatively easy for her. But, lighten the labours as we might by visits to Adelaide and by packets of ready-made garments of all kinds, there was still much confusion, much packing, and even much needlework to be done. Two or three dress-makers, besides our own services, were required to reduce matters to anything like order in time for the next outgoing steamer.

Jenny often drove over and gave her help in the household arrangements. She was not, as she said, much good at needlework, excepting at the very plainest sewing and hemming. Her turn of mind was decidedly practical. She was a splendid cook; her tact in household details could not be excelled. But in all fine work, in those delicate touches of beautifying and embellishing, she was entirely deficient.

"If I must have needlework, give me some sheets or towels—something for the machine; or let me have the packing, I can do that," she said, laughing, one morning. "Bessie can do more with her left hand on the children's dresses than I with right and left together."

It was just a natural gift with me. I could take up an idea, or imitate a fashion, or turn or twist a bit of lace or ribbon to effect; and of course I knew it, and was willing to use my power to the utmost. Jenny said she was only afraid that that "utmost" was very trying to me.

So many days of it! Yes, it was trying, for



mamma was so excited, and at last had one of her bad attacks in the middle of the work, and for two or three days could do nothing at all. But during those two or three days Jenny was almost constantly with us ; and with her good system of organization and Miss Upton's quiet, but efficient help, and my own "utmost" endeavours, we did more than we had done for a fortnight previously, so that mamma, who had sadly bemoaned not only her own suffering but loss of time, was fairly astonished by what we had accomplished.

"If only papa, and you, and Gussy were going," said Maude one evening, as she sat crouching on the window seat of the dining-room, just before tea, and between the lights. Without it was gloomy enough ; and yet we had turned from the comfortable room where the servant was already arranging the table, from the ruddy light of the fire that was sending its warm glow over the pictures on the walls, and the silver on the table, and sparkling in bright points among the lustres that hung from the chandelier. And there we sat, Maudie and I, looking out on the wet, sodden lawn and the hills in a mist beyond, watching the drops of rain as they fell from the leaves, and the little bubbles as they danced and gleamed in the puddles along the garden path and at the corner of the verandah posts.

"We cannot have all our wishes, Maudie," I answered in a low, half-dreamy voice. "Perhaps it would not be quite well if we could. I dare say it seems hard to you that papa cannot go with you ; but as to Gussy and I, we should be rather in the way, I fancy. You are going to mamma's relations, to your

own uncles and aunts, you know, dear ; and we have nothing to do with this money that comes to you and mamma. You understand this, of course ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I quite understand it *now*,” said Maude slowly ; “ but it does not prevent my wishing you could go with us, dear sister Bessie ; and I have been wanting you so *dreadfully* all these weeks you were away, and since then everything has been in such a whirl that I have scarcely had time to think even.”

“ Have *you* been wanting me, too, Maudie ? ” I asked, with a closer clasp to the arms that entwined my waist.

“ Yes, Bessie, I have wanted you so badly, I could not go to any one else, and I have felt very lonely, and very miserable.”

“ About what, Maudie ? ”

“ About what we used to think about before dear Sidney died,” she answered in a low voice. “ Often when you went away I used to lie awake at night, thinking, if it had been I instead of Sid, where should I have been ? ”

“ Ah ! God has taken him into the full light of His city ; He has spared you, Maudie,” I answered, my eyes full of tears. “ Perhaps He is leading you by this very trial into the light.”

“ It does not seem light.”

“ No ; but you see the darkness, and it is distasteful ; that is a step forward towards the light. You see this much, dear Maudie, that you are a sinner and that you want a Saviour. Do you not ? ”

“ Oh, Bessie, yes.” And the head, with its fair soft curls, was laid on my shoulder.

“ You are willing to come to Christ the light ? ”

"Yes, oh yes! but I don't know *how* to come!"

"If you were in any great trouble, dear Maudie, do you think you would hesitate to go to father, and ask him to help you?"

"No; I am sure I should not; but this—oh, this seems so different!"

"Yes, it is different, but the difference is all on the right side; for Jesus, our Father, is able to help to the *uttermost*,—able and willing, too, dear Maudie. Do you think He would say, 'Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' if He was not just as willing to receive you as you to come?"

"Does He mean *just that*, Bessie?" she asked, in eager surprise.

"*Just that*. He means you to take Him at His word, Maudie, just to take yourself and all your sins to Him. Tell Him exactly what you want: *light*, that you may understand His word and see your way, and *help* in all the little difficulties as well as the large ones; mind that, dear Maudie, nothing is too small for His notice," I whispered, for I heard mamma's footstep, and I knew she was sadly afraid of what she termed "depressing influences" for Maudie, and of late she had been rather jealously observant of our intercourse. Maudie knew this, too, perhaps from more definite intimation than had reached me, for with one hasty hug and kiss she slid down from the window seat on which she had been crouched—with her feet tucked under her—as we talked, disappearing through one door as mamma entered by the other.

It was almost the last opportunity afforded me for even a word touching the light towards which dear



Mandie's young eyes were so eagerly turned. I had to leave it there, prayerfully, and not without hope. The seed was sown; God could alone give the increase, and no adverse teaching could resist His power.

"Depressing influences!" It was the keynote to all poor mamma's actions. I remembered the time of my own illness, and how she had left home with the children for fear there might be infection, though the doctor repeatedly assured her there was no danger of any, and how thorough a course of renovation, cleansing, and painting, and fumigating every place and thing had undergone before she ventured to return. It had been the same all along; the changes of arrangements and furniture during the few weeks of our absence in Victoria sufficiently proved how she detested to linger in the shadow. But this, alas! was not a thirsting after the true light, it was a mere morbid shrinking from sickness and death, an ignoring, in fact, anything connected with a future life, because of the gloom with which she imagined the subject was surrounded. And, alas! to her religion was a gloomy thing—she failed to see its brightness, and light and glory—because she saw it not in the face of Jesus Christ.

And what could I do? Nothing I could say on the subject would have been listened to, or indeed permitted. All that I could venture on was a word now and then to my young sisters and brothers, who all clung round sister Bessie, continually expressing a wish that she was going with them. Poor children! how little power had sister Bessie to do them any good, and how fast the time was passing away.

As the time drew nearer for their departure, I noticed with pain that my father was suffering greatly, more than he chose to reveal. He was very fond of his wife, and the children were all very dear to him, and it was a heavy trial that he was obliged to stay behind, or that they were compelled to go. Once or twice, indeed, he seemed inclined to put the doctor's orders on one side, and to go at whatever cost. On one occasion, when in Adelaide, mamma induced him to consult an eminent medical man, hoping that his advice would annul the verdict of the other. But it was of no avail; his opinions exactly coincided with those Dr. Mortimer had expressed, only he spoke less hopefully, and particularly urged the avoidance of all great exertion or excitement; so though mamma affected to laugh at his fears, and tried to make him think the parting was a mere nothing, that the time would go so fast that they would be back again before he missed them, the clouds still deepened across his brow, and he every day was more visibly oppressed.

"It is a jolly good thing that this is nearly over," said Gussy the evening before the departure. The luggage had been sent forward under safe convoy, and was already aboard; and nothing remained but for the whole family to follow on the morrow. Father, Gussy, and I were to see them off, and the children had been dismissed early to bed, that they might be up in good time in the morning.

"You are right, Gussy," I answered in a low voice; "all this excitement, and the thought of the separation is sadly affecting poor father. It is very hard for him. I shall be thankful when it is

over and he can rest, and have time to grow stronger."

But the next day was more trying than any of the previous ones. We were prepared for that. It was more trying because father endeavoured to appear quite calm and resigned ; but as we travelled along I saw the tears come into his eyes many times, as they fell upon his wife, looking so well and so pretty and even young, in her new travelling-dress, or when they rested on the children, the bright, fair-haired girls and boys who clustered round him, as though they were determined he should not be left behind. I could scarcely bear it myself, for it did seem a hard thing, and yet how could I wish him to go? Even for his own sake I could not.

It was a terrible time, that last half-hour that we spent on board. Gussy and I made our adieus to mamma and kissed the children over and over again, and then went on shore, there to await father, deeming sacred the last few moments he had to spend with them. Then came the cry, "All ashore!" The bell rang out loud and shrill. I saw my father's white head bared to the sun and gleaming like silver as he entered the little boat—for the vessel lay out from the wharf. A few moments more and he was by our side, pale and with compressed white lips, his hat still in his hand, and his handkerchief slightly waving to the dear ones on board in his almost nerveless fingers.

There we stood, on either side of him, terribly afraid that he would fall, but not daring to speak ; and thus we remained till every vestige of the vessel had dis-



appeared, till even the long trail of smoke that floated in her wake had vanished. Then my father passively allowed us each to take him by the arm and lead him away, his stiff lips murmuring as we did so,—

“I shall never see them any more!”

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED.

“Walking circumspectly ; not as fools, but as wise.”

EPH. v. 15.

OUT over the wide ocean went the mail steamer on its homeward voyage with its freight of passengers. We stayed one night in Adelaide, for father was too exhausted to go on, even had there been time. In the early morning we started for our quiet home—doubly quiet now after the noise and confusion and excitement of the last few weeks.

It was winter still, but far on in July, and the sun sometimes shone pleasantly out in the middle of the day, and there were little evidences of the coming spring here and there, which to me were very delightful. In some places along the road I noticed that the wattel was coming into bloom. In a few sheltered spots there were already almond-trees in blossom, scattering their leaves like tiny snowflakes under the branches. The air felt soft and balmy, and as we left Adelaide and wound in and out among the hills its pureness and freshness was exceedingly welcome. I do not think my father noticed it, for he sat leaning back in his seat, leaving the reins and the box to Gussy, for we only took the buggy back with us.

Our family trap was left behind in Adelaide for sale. "If we should ever want one again, we will buy a new one," father had said. So we journeyed back in the hooded buggy. Sometimes I sat with father, but oftener with Gussy on the box-seat, for father seemed to prefer being alone and had no inclination to talk, and Gussy, full of his own wild spirits, wanted a little restraining.

"It is hard for father," I softly said. I had said it many times, but I wanted to cool down a little of the ebullition of Gussy's spirits, which I was afraid would be painful to him—to my father, I mean. "Depend upon it, Gussy," I continued, "he feels mamma's going terribly, even though it is but for a time, and I am very anxious about him, for there must really be something very wrong in the matter if a voyage would kill him. I have thought he has not been strong for a long time, but I have never heard him complain? Have you?"

"Yes, once or twice; after climbing a hill or lifting a weight—nothing more," Gussy returned in a low voice, turning suddenly grave. "But, Bessie," he continued, "I don't think there can be anything very wrong, for Dr. Mortimer says he may live many years."

"He does not seem to think that himself," I returned, with a sudden frightened recollection of the words he uttered as he turned away from the wharf: "I shall never see them again!"

"Oh! that was only because he was low-spirited. Why, surely, Bessie, you don't attach any meaning to words of that sort?"

"No, certainly not," I answered; "it would be foolish to do so; and it will be a poor way of comforting father by making ourselves miserable," I added. "As you say, it is, perhaps, only that he is feeling low about this parting, and that makes him look at the dark side of everything. We must try and make it less lonely for him, poor father!"

We had started early for home, but had taken the journey very leisurely, stopping for two or three hours in the middle of the day at a wayside hotel; and while father lay on the sofa asleep (I think he must have slept little during the night), Gussy and I strolled about the neighbouring hills and gullies, searching for fern-roots. There was no doubt about it, father was both physically and mentally exhausted, and he was in no hurry to get back to the quiet home that awaited us. But for his evident despondency it would have seemed very pleasant to me—the quiet and the calm after all the bustle and confusion. As to Gussy, he did not scruple to declare that "it would be something like home now, and he didn't see why we could not make ourselves jolly over our freedom."

"Freedom!" I exclaimed, laughing at his nonsense. "In what way, may I ask, were you bound before?"

"In a dozen different ways. I can now speak above a whisper—"

"I think you generally could do that!" I interrupted.

"I can bring a fellow home to dinner or tea, if I want," he continued, not noticing my interruption. "Oh, I can do plenty of things that I couldn't do before, and you know it, Bess."



"I thought you always could bring *nice* 'fellows' home when you wanted," I rejoined. "Mamma did not object; and you would not wish to bring any other into your father's house?"

"Certainly not; and of course the *mater* would say nothing—that was the thing—she made no objection, but then she was never pleasant. She never cared to make one's friends feel at home; she didn't make them welcome—you know she didn't, Bessie—and so they thought they were intruding, and wouldn't come a second time when I asked them. It will be different now, for I know *you* won't snub them."

"I hope I shall never do that," I replied, nearly breaking the blade of my pocket-knife in trying to uproot a graceful little fern.

Nevertheless, I did not like all Gussy's friends, and thought they decidedly wanted weeding. I cared little especially for the company of Frank Miller, who, though at least four or five years my brother's senior, appeared much attached to him. He always had been a very frequent, free-and-easy visitor; he lived so near to us that a neighbourly intercourse had existed as long as I can remember. He was as lively as ever, full of droll speeches and laughter, "coming in with a laugh and going out with a roar," as Gussy always said of him, for if he did not roar, he made others roar in spite of themselves. He ignored mamma's cool reception—and she could be very frigid when she chose—but he generally succeeded in making her smile, whether she would or not.

I disliked Frank Miller's visits for more than one reason. He was an irreligious young man, if nothing

worse, inclined to ridicule everything sacred ; and though in my presence he continually checked what was evidently too constant a practice to be readily laid aside, I knew that it was simply out of deference to me, and I was sorry to see how strong an influence he had over Gussy and his immature opinions.

Out of deference to me ? I did not like the motive. It was not that he saw the hatefulness of the deed or recognized it as sin ; he simply wished to stand well in my opinion. That was exactly it. He was too presuming ; he had no warrant for supposing his attentions or deference acceptable. Yet he evidently did, or, at any rate, wished them to be so.

I thought over this as I went on gathering my ferns, and wished that both Gussy and I could be rid of this young man's companionship. I could see so little chance of doing him good, so much of the evil that he might bring. And yet it needed circumspection, it needed wisdom. I wished to win my brother, not to repel him by offering opposition to his friendship. But I could not behave foolishly or act a part, and in order for right action in this matter I must seek for wisdom where it would not be likely to fail me. Gussy evidently so firmly relied upon me for the pleasant entertainment of his friends, that it seemed to me I should find it in this case a difficult matter to please him without giving encouragement where it would be equally wrong and deceitful, as well as repugnant to my feelings, to do so.

However, I had no need to trouble about that now, Gussy was as busy as myself making his selection of

roots, and when we rejoined one another with our treasures, and went back to the hotel, he had apparently forgotten our conversation and was full of nothing but his acquisitions for the fernery at home—a small house of his own erecting and workmanship, in a sheltered place near the dear old willow creek, over which he had lately spent many a leisure hour.

We found father waiting for us, and as anxious now to start as he had been desirous of remaining before. The buggy was already before the door; so carefully packing our ferns in wet moss and weeds, and disposing them under the seat in an empty box, we were presently proceeding swiftly along on the homeward route.

The clouds were gathering slightly in the west, and the sun went down in a misty haze that betokened change of weather. I saw father once looking anxiously at the sun setting, and knew too well where his thoughts were.

"There is one thing certain," I presently said in a cheerful voice, "we can't judge a bit what kind of weather there is on the sea by what there is on land."

"No," chimed in Gussy, "we may have it wild enough on shore, and on the sea it may be as smooth as a mill-pool. It's only along the coast that we may judge of the weather by the land breezes."

"Yes; you are right," said my father; and I thought he cheered up a bit after that. And though that evening as we sat at tea—an extra nice tea that Mary had prepared for the master's home-coming—the windows rattled as the wind rushed round the



house, and rain beat against the panes and made the fire that glowed on the hearth very acceptable, he did not resume the anxious look that for a few moments bore him down. Once, indeed, I heard him murmur, as he drew aside the curtain for a minute and looked out into the night,—

“It may be—probably is—quite fine on the sea.”

“Father, dear,” I ventured, with a trembling heart, as I gave him a good-night kiss, “isn’t it good to know that God is on the sea as well as the land, that the winds and the waves are all under His control, and that He is ever ready to hear us?”

“It is good, my child, to have your simple faith,” he answered, turning away. “And maybe,” he added, “you are right.”

It was something gained, even that acknowledgment. I went to sleep with wet eyes, but they were not tears of unhappiness. It might be that the very cross that my dear father was bearing might lead him to Christ; and when I thought of his silver hairs and the illness that threatened him, how earnestly I prayed that it might be so!

Many times in the night I woke, and heard the rain plashing up against my window, and the wind go sighing round the house, brushing the rose-sprigs up and down the panes, and my heart went forth in earnest prayer for those on the sea, that one and all might be blessed and kept and taught to cling in simple faith to Christ alone.

My path—my new path—was before me. How I needed, indeed, Divine guidance that I might walk circumspectly, doing nothing without prayer, not

acting with foolish haste or without forethought, and, above all, seeking day by day the wisdom that cometh from on high to rule, to regulate my words and actions, my whole being, my life.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DAWN OF BETTER THINGS.

"Walking in love."—EPH. v. 3.

FOR a whole week my father went listlessly about the house and grounds, unable to settle to any employment, or to fall into the broken routine of every-day work. It was pitiable to see him so depressed. I did my best to cheer him, and to draw him away from the thoughts that were too heavy for him. At first, however, he kept very much away by himself, and I almost despaired of gaining any influence over him or doing him any service. But at last, by degrees, he began to come into the dining-room in the evening, as soon as the air grew chilly, just before the lights came. I took care that there should always be a bright little fire to welcome him, and his large chair drawn up in readiness. Sometimes a friend would drop in to tea, and make a little stir and change in our quiet life—Jenny and her husband, or the doctor, and now and then our clergyman.

But one evening, when there was no one with us, after the tea-things were removed, I went quietly into the parlour, where a pleasant fire was also burning, and sat down at the piano to play and sing as I used to do for Sidney. It was hard at first, and

I could scarcely have carried out my resolve had not the gloaming concealed the tears that would come with the memory. But I was well rewarded for my efforts when, the second evening, I heard my father come quietly into the room, and, seating himself in his large arm-chair, lean back in its depths, quietly listening.

My voice shook a little ; but what an earnest prayer I breathed for wisdom in selection—for something that would reach my father's heart, and waken some echoes of the past ! I was singing the dear old familiar "Rock of Ages" when he first came in. It had been a great favourite of my own mother's, and it was that, I think, attracted him to the room ; though he always did like to hear me sing, and I remember on one occasion he had said to Sidney,—

"Bessie has a sweet voice ; it is very much like what your mother's was at her age."

So I sang "Rock of Ages" to the end—softly and soothingly—and then, after allowing my fingers to wander in a little symphony of my own over the keys, I took up another strain—Mrs. Elliot's sweet words,—

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
Save that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee—  
Oh, Lamb of God, I come."

How the words entered my own soul, lending strength and pathos to my voice ! So simple, so easy this coming to Christ seemed to me as I sang. Oh, how I hoped that it would prove as clear to my father !



I could not tell how he had taken it, for as I played the few parting chords I heard him rise from his chair and go quietly out. I gently closed the piano, and went up to my room. The *seed-sowing* was all that I could do; the harvest was in God's hands.

After that, whenever we were alone in the evening I made a practice of singing in the gloaming before the lights were needed. I always loved that time "between the lights," when hands had liberty to be idle and limbs to rest—a time of all others, so it appeared to me, when the heart is most open to holy influences, and God seems so near. It was at such times I used to play for Sidney as he lay on the old cane lounge beneath the window, and perhaps for that reason I felt it to be so. It was for my father now I played, though he never made any remark, but either sat quietly in his great arm-chair, or, as the evenings grew warmer and the windows were open later, walked slowly up and down the verandah, with his hands clasped behind him, up and down, till the last chord was struck, and then he went quietly back again to the dining-room to his book or his newspaper.

It was quiet, very quiet, no doubt, but we had known it so before. Mamma and the children went away every summer for a few weeks at the seaside; it had always been her custom to do so. When I was the children's governess I used to go too, and Jenny, before she was married, always kept house. So really, the quiet was not without precedent. It was, of course, the distance and the length of time that was to intervene made all the difference.

Father himself was a quiet man—I could not remember him as anything else—and as long as I had anything to do with things the children had very much to be kept out of the way and as quiet as possible, particularly for mamma's sake ; therefore I was not without hope that he would soon become reconciled to the present way of life, and hearing from the Cape (for in those days we did not traverse the ocean so rapidly as in the present time, and it was from the Cape we looked for letters), he would make up his mind to the inevitable absence, and fall into the old routine. Till these letters came I had but little hope that he would regain his spirits, and for these, then, must be a time of waiting.

We had not, after all, so long to wait. One evening I took my work, some simple frilling that did not require much care, and walked slowly up and down the avenue towards the large gates ; for Gussy had gone to the neighbouring township—to the blacksmith's, I think, to get one of the horses shod—and knowing that he would call at the post-office, and thinking it possible that he might bring me letters from some of my friends, or that, at any rate, there were magazines and newspapers due, I sauntered up and down, awaiting his arrival.

Four weeks had gone slowly by since we watched the steamer out of sight, carrying its freight of precious human souls, in which we were so much interested, far away from our shores. A weary time for father ; but I had my own every-day work to take up, to overlook the household, and see that all went straight. There was responsibility in the under-

taking ; for though I had an excellent assistant in dear old Mary, our cook, who was ever ready with her help or advice in time of need, there were yet many things I had been accustomed to do that helped to make the days less monotonous, and kept me from morbidly dwelling on the past.

We were just at the end of August now, and though the first part of the month had been very wet, yet now the spring weather seemed to burst upon us, and two or three pleasant, sunshiny days had dried up the pools, sparkled in the waters of the creek, and added blossoms to the trees in the garden, making everything look beautiful, and gladdening my heart.

The almond blossoms had all fallen, leaving young green almonds behind, but there were pink and white apple blossoms appearing here and there in the orchard. The acacias had not flowered yet, but they were already clothing themselves in green, and the sun came glinting down between the young feathery branches over my head, throwing a pale green light around my path.

My work lay listlessly in my fingers ; the twittering of the birds, the quivering of the leaves, the very fragrance of the flowers, were too potent in their influence to allow of anything but thought. I went and leaned on the large gates, looking towards the grave-yard where dear Sidney was placed. I could not see the spot, but from where I stood the spire of the little church was visible, gleaming through the trees ; it had caught some of the rays of the setting sun.

Dear Sidney ! how I still missed him, how every



place still seemed filled with his presence! But I had struggled against the rebellious sorrow that had so long prostrated me; I could now rejoice for him, and look forward one day to a happy reunion. I remembered his words, too, "If *rest* is given to *me*, and *work* for you, dear Bessie, there will be light for the work."

After all, what work was I doing? The tears came into my eyes as I asked myself that question. What was that work I had to do? And then came Sidney's words again, "You must take Gussy under your care, he wants a sister's help; he is so impulsive, so easily led away; a rough diamond—needing a little polish—but I have strong hope for him. He is *thinking*; *you* must help him to work his thoughts out."

Had I done this? No; till that moment I had forgotten both Sidney's words and the hint they contained. Was Gussy "thinking" still; or, poor fellow, had the thoughts been put on one side, and earthly subjects and objects interposed, for want of the "word in season"?

I bowed my head down upon the rail and prayed, "Oh, Father, leave me not to my own poor devices, or I shall never shine for Thee." Ah! it is ever thus; our light is derived, not from ourselves, but from Him; and only as we have this light in our own hearts—over our own lives—can we diffuse it. Surely my little light for a season had been hidden.

Along the road came Gussy. I heard the sharp trot of the pony, old Star, as we called him, from the small white spot on his forehead. I heard the sweet,

melodious whistle of my brother ringing out on the evening air ; but I had by this time forgotten all about letters and papers, amidst the multitude of other thoughts ; and as he approached, and his fine stout figure was clearly defined by the mellow, soft-tinted sky behind him, now fast fading into evening's mystic light, I only thought of my forgotten duty and how I should resume it ; how in all love I should win my brother—this other dear brother that was still left me—to the feet of the Saviour.

He came up with a merry shout, a laugh of pleased surprise, as I threw the gates widely open.

"Why, Bess," he exclaimed as he rode in, and then, turning round, stood while I closed the gates after him, "one would think you were expecting good news !"

"No," I replied, smiling back at him. "No ; I stood here simply for my own pleasure, and to watch for you. Have you got any news for me ?"

"Yes ; I have. But I've a package for father in here that he didn't expect, and it will do him good. It is from 'far out at sea,' brought by a passing vessel!" And Gussy swung himself off his horse, throwing the reins over its neck and leaving it to find its own way to the stable, which it always did, and with the post-bag in his hand went in, while I followed him joyfully exclaiming,—

"Oh, Gussy ! what good news ! How glad I am ! and what will it be for father ?" as we entered the dining-room together.

There sat father in his great arm-chair, which was drawn up near the window. He was sitting quite

still with a book in his hand; but he was not reading, it was too dark for that; and though the lamp was lighted, it was turned down so low that there was only a very faint circle of light just in its vicinity.

As Gussy threw down the letter-bag and began to toss out the letters, I turned up the lamp to be in readiness for action, and then taking the precious packets, at a sign from my brother, exclaimed rejoicingly,—

"Here, father dear, this is unexpected. A letter from mamma, far out at sea, by the *Vermont*, a passing vessel."

My father rose erect, yet trembling, and turning very pale as he stretched out his hand eagerly for the packets.

"From sea!" he exclaimed bewildered, and yet recognizing the familiar writing.

"Yes, father," said Gussy, "a lucky chance, I suppose. It is often done." And then we left him to the enjoyment of his unexpected news; but not before I had heard the low-breathed "Thank God!" with which he read the first few lines; and by that I knew that all was well.

Dear father, how he brightened up after that letter! Short though it was, it bridged over the time. It would not seem so long to wait for the rest. A little hope is a wonderful medicine. Nevertheless, I was sadly uneasy at times for my father's health. He seemed to grow thinner and whiter every day, or I fancied so; and that cough of his was very troublesome. Had he taken fresh cold? I made up



my mind to waylay Dr. Mortimer, and coax him to tell me what he really thought of father, and if he was really seriously ill.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GUSSY'S OPINION.

"Walking in truth."—2 JOHN i. 4.

A FEW weeks later on the spring came in with full beauty, and the flowers in the garden were lovely. There was a rich promise of fruit everywhere, and every breath of the warm air came laden with fragrance. October had even brought with it one or two hot winds, though from these we were nicely sheltered, and they did us little harm, on the contrary clearing the atmosphere, and drying away those germs of disease that go floating about in the air, alighting on the predisposed with sure tenacity.

I think the heat coming on so suddenly was rather trying to father. He stayed more at home than he used, lying about either on the sofa inside the house or on the new lounge without. He had taken Sidney's place, and yet he made no complaint, and tried to talk indifferently on general subjects; but I often thought it cost him an effort, and that his mind was elsewhere while he talked.

I still played and sang for him every evening, sometimes going over the old familiar tunes and words, at other times bringing in more modern ones. I knew that he enjoyed the quiet hours, for if I was a little later than usual he would call me, and if I had happened to omit one of his favourites for a day or

two he would ask for it. He never seemed tired of hearing "Rock of Ages," or "Just as I am," however frequently sung. I noticed another thing also. The large old Bible that used to lie under its green baize cover, back on the sideboard in the dining-room, had disappeared; and one day, having occasion to go into my father's study, I found it lying upon the table open, and a book-marker resting upon its leaves. My heart gave a great leap of thanksgiving. Was the "light" indeed piercing the darkness? Oh, how I rejoiced at the tokens!

With Gussy I had had but little chance, for father's disinclination for business, or inability to attend to it personally, threw a great deal of work on his young shoulders. But he was a clever boy, and always had been; indeed he was fast losing even the appearance of a boy—the hair on both lip and chin were wonderfully transforming. He had grown so tall, too, and looked so strong and well. No doubt constantly riding or walking about in the open air contributed to this. And when he did come home he was so bright and cheerful that he was like a gleam of sunshine in our midst.

The worst of it was I never could get him alone. We had, as I said, no chance of a word together, for when he was at home he always had either one or another of his friends with him. They were nice enough young fellows most of them, but as far as I knew not calculated to do him much real good, any one of them. Frank Miller had lately found some pretext or other for coming in and out, whether Gussy was at home or not, and greatly to my annoy-

ance, and I think rather to my father's discomfort. He often came while I was playing in the evening, and, taking a seat by the window unasked, would talk to my father, thus preventing him from listening to the words, watching me at the same time, till in sheer desperation I would softly close the piano, and, slipping out at a side door, would take care not to appear again till I was quite certain he had left the house.

"You don't seem to care for young Miller's company," said my father, on one of these occasions, with a twinkle of his eye, as I came quietly in to supper after one of these enforced absences.

"No, father, dear!" I answered, with a slight accession of colour, "I certainly do not."

"And what particular objection have you to him, may I ask?"

"In any case, I do not think I could like him; he is not the sort of man to command one's respect," I replied; "but I can have no feeling in common with one who ridicules God's Word and holds all sacred things lightly as he does."

"Well, if he can't understand the hint, he is more obtuse than I thought him," responded my father, looking grave. "But I'm glad you feel so, Bessie, my child; I should not care to part with my little girl in that direction."

"You never will, papa!" I answered in a low voice, yet so decisively that my father laughed, exclaiming, "I see there is no fear."

If only I could have got rid of him quietly, without any further trouble, how glad I should have



been ; but I doubted his taking a hint so readily, and every day I was becoming more and more conscious of the bent of his determination. All I could do was to ward off the evil, and there was something cowardly even in that. I did, indeed, feel sorry that this precious evening hour, the hour of all others when dear father seemed more especially mine, should be disturbed—sacrilegiously disturbed, I thought it—by Frank Miller and his vagaries. But after awhile I began to question the right I had to curtail the hour on account of my own discomfort. It was certainly a cross to continue to sing with the accompaniments of light words and laughter, and the consciousness that all the time the eyes of the young man were not on my father, with whom he was talking, but on me. But I was enabled to take up the cross and go forward, for who could tell whether the motives that had prompted him to break in upon our quiet hour might not be overruled for his good? and the remembrance that it was not for myself, but for Jesus, I was singing, gave me courage to go on. But when the last chord was struck that I intended to play, I gave no warning, just stealing from the room, and not appearing again till he was safely out of the house.

After awhile he grew tired of such an unsatisfactory state of things, and left our quiet hour unmolested, coming indeed quite as often, but at other times in the day. It required great skill on my part to avoid the *tête-à-tête* for which he was evidently trying, and which I hoped my marked coolness would teach him to avoid as useless.

Gussy, who had, I must say, shown himself remarkably obtuse in the matter, at last betrayed signs of suspicion. He had come home one morning rather early, and found Frank Miller seated near the lounge on which father was lying, while I, on a low stool some distance off, was preparing some raspberries for the cook, my fingers all rosy with the process. Father had a little basket of the fruit before him, a plate and spoon, and a small pitcher of cream. Both of these had been offered to the visitor and declined. I left my father to do the duty of host, and kept quietly on with my self-imposed task, which I could not conveniently leave, joining as little in the conversation as possible.

I saw that Gussy took in the situation at a single glance,—and after standing a few moments chatting and laughing, and stealing a few raspberries from my dish, he took Frank off to the stables to see a young foal of which he was the fortunate possessor, and which, according to the best authorities, bid fair to prove very valuable.

I was sitting alone when he came back, having seen Frank fairly off the premises; father had gone indoors to his study. He came and placed himself before me, making another onslaught upon the raspberries, and presently said, in a slow, dry way,—

“Am I to understand that you encourage this state of things, Bessie?”

“As, for instance, your stealing the raspberries?” I asked, looking up at him with a smile, though very well assured that was not his meaning.

“How long has Frank taken to pay you morn-

ing visits?" he asked, ignoring the raspberry question.

"Morning visits?" I answered. "I fancy we are not secure from those visits at any part of the day. I think your friend must be shamefully neglecting his business, Gussy."

"That's his own affair," said Gussy rather grandly, taking upon himself the duty of elder brother. "The thing is, not the time he wastes, but what hand have you in his wasting it?"

"None!" I answered, with raised colour and decided accent. "Or, if I must speak plainly, his visits are exceedingly disagreeable to me. I thought you would have found that out, though for your sake I have tried to be civil."

"Well, I confess I have thought that you have treated Frank in a rather stand-off manner of late, but I was not up to the reason. So he comes at all hours, does he? That looks as if he meant mischief." And he sat down on the stool at my side and was silent a moment.

"I always did like Frank," he presently went on. "I liked him because he was good company, and could make a fellow laugh, and was always ready for a lark. But it's another thing," he added deliberately, "to wish to give him one's sister."

"Especially when the sister has no intention to be given," I said significantly.

"Exactly so; and I'm very glad of it. I should despise you, Bess, if you had," he answered vehemently. "Frank Miller, with his notions about religion, would never do for you."



"Does it do for you, Gussy?" I asked in a serious tone. He hesitated a moment—only a moment—and then he answered emphatically,—

"No! it does not do for me. I'm a harum-scarum fellow—very little good in me—none, indeed! but it does not suit me to hear the book which dear old Sid valued so much, which made him contented to live and happy to die, made fun of and ridiculed and *blasphemed*, however little I attend to its words myself; and I'd rather lose the best friend I have than see you married to a man of that stamp!"

"Gussy," I said, my eyes filling with tears at even this avowal of his feelings, "there is no fear that anything like that will ever happen. Frank Miller and I can never have anything in common with each other, and I wish he could find that out. But, Gussy," I continued, rising and placing my hand on his arm to detain him, for in saying the last words he had jumped up, overturning the stool as he did so, and was going off, "don't you think it is worth while to attend to the words of that book yourself, as well as respecting them for dear Sid's sake?"

"More easily said than done, Bess!" he answered rather roughly—to hide his feelings, I thought. "I'm afraid I've not the makings of a saint in me. I can see what's wrong fast enough, but I run slapdash into it nevertheless. I'm a different sort of a fellow to poor Sidney; I can't see that he was ever far wrong."

"He did not tell you that."

"No; he always made out that he had been all wrong till he came to the 'Light,' but I couldn't see

it. He was a splendid fellow, was Sid! It's I that ought to have gone, not he."

"Do you really think so, Gussy?" I asked in a low voice.

"Well, so far as his being wanted here, I mean," he replied, half-way down the steps by this time. "Of course it would have been a bad thing for me. Ah well!" he continued, affecting to yawn, as though tired of the subject, "this won't take me to Amble-side. Father thinks you want horse-exercise, so see what I'll bring home to-night: the prettiest little pony you've seen one while, and splendidly broken in—" and with a wave of his hat he was off.

It was an opening, however, and I was thankful for it. Thankful for the stand he was inclined to take on the side of truth, though he was loath to admit it. He *had* been thinking, then? He was thinking still; and Sidney's words, and Sidney's deeds, and the pure, true light that his memory had left, were still influencing his brother. I praised God that night, and took courage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FOR LIFE OR FOR DEATH.

"Where is your faith?"—LUKE viii. 25.

MEANWHILE time sped on, and one day the ocean mail came in, bringing its freight of longed-for letters to us—letters from the Cape, but by the time they reached us those who wrote them would, in all probability, be on English shores. The next letters would be direct from the old country.

I was so glad for father; he enjoyed the reading of those letters so much. Mamma was so greatly improved in health, and had suffered so little by seasickness, and the children were in fine condition, both as to health and spirits. There were little letters from all three girls—letters for papa—and a private packet for me. Maude's was intended for my inspection only, at least the postscript, which had been hastily written, and as hastily thrust in and gummed down. I could scarcely make out the words when I had, with great care, succeeded in opening the envelope; but when I did decipher them it was with tears in my eyes that I read,—

“Oh, Bessie, dear, I haven't forgotten a bit all you've so often talked to me about, and I do still want to love Jesus; but it's so hard on board ship; there's no place to one's self, and everything to take off one's thoughts and make one forget. But I'm so glad of one thing you told me—that we may pray anywhere, and God hears us just the same. Don't forget to pray for your loving sister,  
MAUDIE.”

The little, hurried scrawl, so hastily tucked in and gummed down, told its own tale. Dear Maudie, she was going forth into temptation; but God was able to water this little germ of truth and to preserve it alive, and all that I could do was to pray that it might be so.

The letters were a great pleasure to father, but he did not gain strength or vigour. It was a trying summer, clear, rainless skies, hot winds sweeping down upon us, parching up the grass, withering down the flowers, and taking the strength out of the



strongest among us. No wonder the weak or the ailing suffered. Yet father had never so suffered before; and I saw at last that even our good doctor looked concerned at the prostration and languor, on which his tonics seemed powerless to produce effects.

I had vainly tried to waylay the doctor, and to get his real opinion about father. That there must be something radically wrong I was convinced, and I was growing quite distressed about it. Yet I did not wish to raise suspicion in his mind, or to allow him to think that I was alarmed, though it was a difficult matter to conceal my thoughts.

I resolved at last to wait no longer, but to go at once to Jenny's house and influence her to make inquiries of the doctor, or, at any rate, try to awaken her to the necessity which, somehow, she did not seem to realize.

Gussy had been as good as his word, and a splendid little pony, a docile and beautiful creature, was waiting my service whenever I was able to avail myself of him. I had already been two or three rides with my father; not far distant or fast, to be sure, for he did not seem to be able to bear it. One delightful gallop I had with Gussy, and felt all the better for it. But this afternoon I made up my mind to go alone and hear all that the doctor could tell me. Gussy had driven my father a few miles out upon some particular business which needed them both; and having ordered my pony to be taken to the end of the avenue, I leisurely walked under its pleasant shade to the large gates, where our young groom, as

I called him, a youth of seventeen, stood giving some last inspection to the buckles of the saddle.

It was a lovely afternoon. The sun, to be sure, was hot, but a little breeze met me as I rode along under the large trees that flanked one side of the road, throwing a pleasant shadow most of the way. The road on the other side was brown with rustling wheat nearly ready for harvest, while here and there, lying back amongst gardens and barns, were farmhouses, from the doors of which I had cheerful greetings as I went past.

I had but little spirit to respond to those greetings, for my mission lay heavy at my heart, and the nearer I came to the possibility of knowing, the greater my dread of the knowledge.

What was I dreading? For, after all, the doctor could only give his opinion, and he might be wrong. He held not the keys of life and death; no, they were under my heavenly Father's care. Had I forgotten that? Was I going to the earthly physician without seeking Him who has a balm for every wound, however terrible?

Half-way between our house and Jenny's stood that of Dr. Mortimer. I knew I was very near it, and thought it possible, barely possible, that I might see him. But with these thoughts I slackened my speed and drew my rein, and subsided almost into a walk, for though I wanted so much to hear the truth, I feared as much to know it.

Some yards from the house I came upon the doctor himself. He was just starting from home; not driving, but riding his old roan mare. He wheeled round and came up hastily to my side.

"Nothing the matter, I hope, at home, Miss Bruce?" he exclaimed, in what seemed to be rather an anxious tone. "Were you coming to my house?"

"There is nothing *fresh* the matter; but, doctor," I exclaimed in desperation, "we can never go on like this. My father, I am sure, is getting seriously ill, and I've come to beg you to tell me what you really think of him. I know you mean it for kindness, but don't you think it is false kindness to keep us and father in the dark?"

"My dear child, your father is not in the dark; he knows."

"Knows what, doctor? Knows that he is going to die and leave us all; is that what you mean?" and for a moment I turned so faint that the doctor sprang from his horse and came and laid hold of me, fearing, I suppose, that I should fall.

"While there is life there is hope, Miss Bessie," he exclaimed, "you know that, surely; and it will never do for you to give way."

"But what is this illness, doctor? Is it nothing that you can cure? It is better that I should know, indeed it is," I answered, struggling to keep back my tears and to speak calmly.

"Well, perhaps it is," said the doctor gravely; "though bear in mind that these internal diseases—such as your father is suffering from—often baffle the wisest and most learned of the profession. This is no new thing; your father has suffered for years slightly from the same cause. There was some aggravation of the symptoms after your brother's death—a shock to the system which affected him much—and since there have been many exciting



causes ; yet I did not consider there was any reason to doubt that with ordinary care and quiet he might live for some years. A long sea voyage was, of course, out of the question."

"But what do you think now?" I asked, almost below my breath, my hand trembling so, I could scarcely grasp the reins.

"Miss Bessie, I wish you would come in and rest awhile, and let Mrs. Mortimer talk to you!" said the doctor, looking concerned at my pale face. "No, you won't?" But really you are alarming yourself unnecessarily. I confess I am not quite satisfied with the symptoms that have been developing themselves the last few weeks, though no doubt the heat has something to do with that. Still a different course of medicine may mitigate these."

"And if they should not?"

"Well, Miss Bessie, I should have expected you to tell me that your father is in the Almighty's hands. We doctors are but human after all!"

"Doctor! I deserve the reproof," I replied, bending down nearly to the saddle to hide my tears. "It is so, and I know it, and God can do all things! I see you have little hope to give; and, oh! it is all so unexpected. I cannot realize any danger."

"Nor is there, so far as I can see, any *immediate* danger. We may be enabled to avert this. I don't like the symptoms, that's all. Where is your father to-day, Miss Bessie?"

I told him, and he shook his head. "He had better not trouble himself with business for awhile, and avoid these long rides," he replied. "I must

tell him so. I will look in this evening. Meanwhile, Miss Bessie, you must keep brave and cheerful for his sake. It's a pity Mrs. Bruce is away; and yet, I don't know," he added, "maybe it is better so." And shaking my hand with a warm, friendly clasp, he remounted his horse and rode rapidly off.

I stood for a moment just where he left me, dazed, astounded at the confirmation of my own fears; though after all I had scarcely believed that things were so serious. And yet it was right that I should know, it was right that Jenny should know. How much of the truth had they told mamma, I wondered; and why had we been kept in ignorance that there was anything ailing dear father all these years, and that it was not merely weakness from which he suffered?

I must go to Jenny, that was clear; and lifting the reins, the pony galloped lightly forward. "Oh, if my sister only could help me with words of real cheer, of Christian hope!" I thought. I seemed to need so much the strengthening of these weak words of mine. Surely I was walking in darkness rather than in the light. And yet I knew, as the doctor had said, unbeliever as I had always thought him, that my father was in the hands of One who, because he was "Almighty," could best help, could never err. Yes, he was indeed in these "Almighty" hands. There was comfort in the word. Nothing was too hard, too great for Him. Why could not I trust to His doing all things well?

Why? Because my faith was weak, weaker far than a grain of mustard seed; and because I was

walking on the waves, and they were boisterous, and could see only the heaving depths beneath me. Had I looked upwards, I should have seen the Christ.

I took no interest in anything along the road on either hand for the rest of the way. The thought of my father having silently suffered from day to day so long, with no murmuring word, no complaint on his lips, struck me with strange awe. How was he bearing it all? He was so reticent. Might it not be possible that he was leaning on this Almighty arm; and not, as I had feared, carrying his cross alone? And then I recalled his quiet craving for some of the dear old hymns that had been my own beloved mother's favourites and comforts. In those days, when I was too young to think much about it, in my mother's life-time, might it not have been that he had entered into the light, and that since then worldly influence and worldly affections and cares had dimmed the light and brought the clouds between? and that now, through these clouds, the bright light might be shining again?

"Oh, if it were only so!" and my heart beat more hopefully with the thought. "It might be—it might be—why not?" and as I turned in at the large gates, that had for some reason been left open, and rode slowly down to the stables, I was not quite so despairing as when the doctor left me, and far more able quietly to discuss the subject with my sister.

It was a new house, this of Jenny's, and with all the bareness of new appointments around it. Pleasantly situated enough, with a background of hills and a creek running past the front of the house, near



which Ernest had a plantation of young orange-trees. But all was young and fresh—the very soil had a flavouring of lime about it; the garden, though it was carefully laid out, looked dry even for the season. It was abundantly planted, but the plants and trees were of too recent growth to put forth much of an appearance, for its owners had, till the last few months, been so much away that it was not surprising so little progress had been made.

“My dear child! what brings you here through all this heat?” my sister exclaimed, as, leaving the pony munching at some hay I had pulled for him, I walked back unobserved to the house, and, entering at the open door, looked about till I found Jenny busy at work in her little back sitting-room.

She pulled off my hat and made me sit down in a large rocking-chair, thrusting a palm-leaf fan into my hand, and presently brought me a glass of cool milk and a slice of cake. I took the milk but I could not eat; and at last, thrusting both fan and milk aside, I burst forth with the subject that was uppermost in my heart, and told her all that the doctor had said about our father’s illness.

My sister was greatly distressed at first, and yet she had not been so entirely blind to the change that had been coming over father for some time past as I had thought her. She could not understand, she said, why we—Gussy, herself, and I—should have been kept in the dark—we had surely a right to be told; and at first she was inclined to blame mamma. But I told her that I did not believe mamma herself knew fully the serious nature of the complaint, or I

did not think she would have gone to England in any case.

"I'm glad we know now, that is, if Dr. Mortimer proves right," Jenny said at last, after we had talked and cried together some time. "I shall often come down and help you, Bessie dear, and together we must cheer poor father up as much as we can, and keep him from doing anything that will hurt him or make him low."

"If I were only quite certain that he is a Christian!" I timidly ventured.

"A Christian? Of course he's a Christian!" said Jenny indignantly. "Why, Bessie, what do you mean? If there is a righteous living, just, honest man on the face of the earth, it's father. And has he not borne all that he must have suffered most beautifully, without one murmuring word? I'm surprised at you, child. Why in mother's time I can remember well he used to be a member of the Church of England, and always in his place, and we always had family prayers. That, to be sure, was all dropped after mother's death; but, nevertheless, if there is a Christian on the face of the earth, father is one. Don't doubt it."

I rode home with this hope in my heart, but founded on no such basis as Jenny relied on. Not, indeed, upon what he had been himself, but in what I could not help trusting he believed: his trust in the Christ, and not in his own work. Oh! I must find out whether it was so; I could never be happy till I knew.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ON THE ROCK.

"Walking by faith, not by sight."—2 COR. v. 7.

FROM years of experience in the Christian life, I have learnt one lesson—a lesson of dependence, not on self, but on Christ. We need something beside our own courage to tread the crest of our troublous waves. We need something beside our own strength to resist the winds of temptation that blow so continuously around us. We just need to look away from winds and waves to Christ! nowhere else, only to Jesus, and then follows the calm!

"The hardest thing in the world to do when the waves are threatening to engulf us, and we are even beginning to sink!" you say. Ah! so it is, yet then is the time of all others to stretch out the hand of faith and cry, "Lord, save!"

The trials were coming thickly around my young Christian life, but my heavenly Father knew just what was best for me, and as the thorns in the nest of the young eaglet teach it to essay an upward flight, so did the instability of all things below lead me to cling to the Rock of Ages with all the force of my young nature.

My mother's death had come suddenly upon me when I was too young to understand the extent of my loss, and the versatility and elasticity of childhood soon dissipated the violence of my childish grief; though the memory of that gentle Christian mother still lingered like sweet perfume, permeating my after



life. Those after years were to teach, by more abiding griefs, the slender tenure upon which we hold all earthly things, the only firm place for our foothold—the “Rock of Ages.”

“All other ground is sinking sands!”

Dear Sidney’s death had been a crushing blow to me, and for a time the clouds hung so low, and the storm raged so high that the light seemed almost gone. “All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me,” was the language of my fainting heart. And so it seemed in those sad days, when I looked to the waves and not to the Christ. We had been so much to each other, Sid and I. Together we had sought for light, together we had entered into the light, and for a little space had walked into the light hand in hand, so glad, so comforted, so at rest! And then came the end, as it seemed at the time for me, till once more a rift in the cloud showed the light beyond, and taught me that Jesus still lived, and that I had to live for Him.

And now a new grief had entered into my life, the “clouds were returning after the rain.” And it was hard to understand the mystery of the fresh trials. Yes, it is a difficult matter to decipher these mysteries, but are we not told that what we cannot understand now shall be made clear to us hereafter? It is blessed to be willing to *wait*, to leave all our hard knots for the future to untie, just as our Father pleases to unravel them. We may learn the meaning of some of our trials perhaps in this life, the life to come will reveal the rest.

Meanwhile, the happiest position is that of a trusting child, knowing nothing certainly of the why or the wherefore, but willing to be led.

And so in these new days of trial, I was able to say after a while, as Miss Procter sweetly sang,

“I do not ask my cross to understand,  
My way to see;  
Better in darkness, just to feel Thy hand  
And follow Thee.”

My father was getting daily worse; that was a fact patent to all; and now that the constant visits of the doctor were imperative, and one or two consultations with an Adelaide physician unavoidable and even tacitly admitted by himself, there was no further effort at concealment, and that must have been a relief to him, though he still bore all uncomplainingly.

The disease so long but insidiously working its way, had been hastened forward by many things. The shock of Sidney's death, the voyage on my account to and from Melbourne, and the consequent sea-sickness attending it so injurious, it afterwards appeared in his case, and these followed by the necessary separation from his wife and the rest of his children, and all the previous confusion and excitement had brought rapidly on the crisis which Dr. Mortimer had hoped might have been delayed some years. There is no doubt that the disease had in reality made more steady progress than his medical men could detect, this in a great measure owing to the reticence of my dear father, who cared rather to suffer in secret than to bring his trouble on those he

loved while it could be avoided. That it was a mistake there is not a doubt, for we were unprepared for the trouble when it did come, and it came more heavily upon us.

On Gussy the intelligence fell with full force. At first he refused to believe the danger, even though he acknowledged that his father was very weak and ill, worse certainly than he had ever seen him; but that there must be an end to it all, that the head of our house would indeed be taken away, was an idea he found it difficult to realize. In fact, he would not entertain it, he shut his eyes determinedly to the fact. It could not, must not be! "What were the doctors at that they could not reach the disease?" And it was mainly in response to his continual urging that doctors from Adelaide were more than once brought up for consultation, with no other result, however, excepting a confirmation of our fears. A mitigation of the suffering was all that could be hoped for; alleviation, not cure, was alone in their power.

In those days Gussy's last remnant of boyhood left him, and though but nineteen, he became a thoughtful man, and the stay of our household. Not that his old joyous nature was crushed out, it was only subdued. He still brought cheer into the house whenever he entered it; and my father rested on him with the fullest conviction in his ability. It was touching to see how in this time of his weakness he leaned on his young son's strength, and trusted him to do and act in all things for him; and with the sense of this responsibility, Gussy grew both stronger and older.



Jenny was almost always at hand, taking the superintendence of the household chiefly on her shoulders once more, making delicate dishes to tempt father's waning appetite, and leaving me to do all the nursing and waiting upon him with old Mary's help.

We had our letters from England at last. Father was too ill to read them when they first arrived, and then only at intervals, a little at a time. Gay, bright letters they were from mamma; full of details of all kinds of pleasant reunions with her family and scenes of excitement, of the favourable termination of the money transactions, which she found handsomely provided for the children as well as for herself. "She scarcely thought that they could be back at the end of the twelve months," she wrote, "there was so much to do and to see. But, after all," she added, "it will not be long; be patient, my dear James, the time will soon fly."

"It will matter little now," I heard my dear father murmur, as with trembling hand he closed the letter; and from that time forth, I think, he laid down his trouble about it.

Once more the little sitting-room—the little room so sacred to memories of dear Sidney—was in requisition. I had made it as cosy as I could for our dear invalid. I had drawn holland covers over all the bright chairs and couch and stools; had put away the handsome table-cover, substituting one that would do service and still look pretty. The large chair, new as it was, was certainly more luxurious than the old; and on a little stand by father's side—a clever contrivance for elevating a book without wearying

the reader—lay the large Bible that had been carried to the study, but which was no longer needed there, for poor father had yielded to the power of the disease, and no longer struggled against it.

All this time very little had passed between us on the subject I had so much at heart, and yet I was growing more and more hopeful every day that he was "in the light." That old Bible was his constant study, ready to turn up at any moment when freedom from pain permitted, and in the gloaming I still sang for him, though without the aid of the piano. "He liked it better," he said, one evening when we were alone; "he could hear the words more distinctly, and my voice seemed sweeter—more like my mother's."

"You are growing very like your mother, Bessie, my child," he said quietly; "you often make me think of her—and you have her faith, too."

"Oh, father dear! and have not you?" I was kneeling at his feet on the hearth-rug and looked up at him, my eyes wet with tears.

"Her faith? No, my child. She *lived* in the light; so near Christ that heaven seemed always near, especially at the last. My faith is feeble indeed. But do not trouble, Bessie, my child; your 'little light,' as you call it, has guided your old father back from the darkness of a bitter unbelief. Your voice has restored the old life—God bless you, my little girl!—that now I can say,—

"Other refuge have I none—

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!"

On the Rock! on the Rock! that is the only refuge  
and there I am clinging."

He got up and walked feebly from the room, leaving me dissolved in tears of joy and thankfulness. At last the barrier of reserve had broken down, never to be re-erected. All was right—out of the darkness of unbelief into the clear light of the cross, with feet upon the rock and eyes directed upwards. Oh! it would all be right—it must be right, and the peace that passeth understanding must follow.

It did follow, but days of acute suffering came with it. It was not by many words that we knew of the anguish which often the sedative draughts of the doctor's prescribing were powerless to subdue. The suffering revealed itself by the pallid cheek, the quivering lip; but the *peace* was there, too—on the brow, and in the eye—and I was privileged to know and to rejoice in it.

"It is all right, Bessie, my child," he would sometimes say after a paroxysm of pain, "not a stroke too much."

"And the strokes are in love, dear father!" I answered, my eyes filling with tears, as I wiped away the dew that anguish had sent to his brow.

"Yes! love unutterable! I shall understand it soon, the heights and the depths of that love that passeth understanding here."

"Oh, Mary!" I whispered, after one of these terrible paroxysms of pain—when the kind old creature was my only assistant—pain which we could do so little to alleviate, and which would have its way till, overpowered by the sedative, it was succeeded by a restless sleep. "Oh, Mary, how good it is to know that dear father is resting on the Rock, that these



billows of suffering only make him cling more closely to it ! ”

“ Ah, Miss Bessie, I always knew old master better than you,” she answered, her honest face bright with joy. “ I knew him in the old days when dear missus was alive, and I always did look for him to come in to the good way again, though for a time it did seem as if he had turned his back upon it. Poor dear ! may the blessed Lord give him ease.”

The letters that went back to England were full of gloomy forebodings of the approaching end. My father’s days were numbered, that we too truly saw, and we dared not withhold the tidings. He sent loving messages to the children, and wrote a letter with his weak, trembling hand to his wife, but it was with great effort, and at long intervals. It was finished at last, and carried off for posting, and then he lay back in his chair, with clasped hands and a look of resignation and rest on his face.

“ Bessie,” he said, in a low, calm voice, “ it seems as if I am leaving the breakers behind ; the sea is smooth ahead, and I can see land.”

“ The land of ‘ Beulah,’ dear father, where the air is full of sweet sounds from the celestial city ? ”

“ Yes,” he answered wearily ; “ I have nearly done with earth now. You will not have your father long, Bessie, my little girl, my patient, loving little girl, but God will care for you all.”

That evening, as Gussy stood at the window, gloomily looking out at the star-spangled sky as it glimmered through the leaves of the gladiolus, he suddenly turned round, saying, “ What do you think,

Bessie, will those letters bring the *mater* back, or not?"

"Not," I replied. "I think she will wait for further intelligence. After that reaches her I do not know what she will do; but if dear father dies, I do not think she will return to Australia; all her own relatives are in England, you know."

"I shall not fret," said Gussy, with a slight accent of contempt. "But, do you think father is so much worse? He does not seem so to me," he added in a grave tone.

"Ah, but you have not seen how he suffers, or now exhausted he is after the suffering," I answered, the quick tears coming to my eyes. "But," I continued, glad to be able to say it, "like dear Sidney, he is at peace, resting on Christ. Can't you do that, dear Gussy? Don't these troubles bring you any nearer to Him?"

"How should they?" said Gussy, turning away. "Did you never hear of head-winds? That's what the trouble seems to me. It's hard, very hard on a fellow, and I can't see the right or the good of it. Father is not so old but he might have lived years yet."

"But what if it is best, if it is happier for him that he should go?"

"It's bad for us, at any rate, Bess. Can't you see it? Why, I am not even of age!"

"Dear Gussy! if you only had Christ for a friend, all would then be well."

"You have that friend; is it well with you? Are not these days of pain and suffering that you see

poor father endure just as agonizing to you? I see they are."

"Yes, it is well, Gussy; for, underlying all this suffering is the sure knowledge that Jesus is near, that He loves too much to hurt His own child. You believe this, do you not?"

"Oh! I'm a poor fellow without belief," he answered; and throwing down the paper he had been reading when I entered, he left the room.

## CHAPTER IX.

"I COME."

"At evening time it shall be light."—ZECH. xiv. 7.

THE days went wearily on—the hot, trying days of summer—and it was sometimes a very difficult thing to cool the atmosphere, or make it at all bearable to the dear, patient sufferer. Two or three times a day Gussy brought the hose round to the front of the house, and played upon the roof, and the walls, and all round, close underneath the bedroom windows, for father no longer left his room and was unable to sit up. He lay, most of the day, upon a large soft spring couch by the side of the window, where, when the sun came round, it filtered through large green leaves, and left a cool, refreshing light behind it; the wind, too, when it blew from the west, brought all its fresh, sweet breath into the room, stirring the curtains and playing among the leaves, and giving the best of its reviving breezes to the sick-room. All day long the windows were open, and all night



too, excepting when the hot wind forced us to close every avenue and exist on the air within as we could.

It was a difficult thing to get ice, so far up the country as we were; but we contrived to do it, and, with our refrigerator, cooling drinks and cool fruit, so necessary in my father's case, even became possible, our large cellar making it easier to accomplish.

But all was of no avail for permanent good; to deaden the suffering, to cool the parched mouth, to bring the sleep that was so tardy in closing the weary eyes, this was all that we could do—Jenny, Gussy, and I—and we bent all our energies to do it.

Still, while the suffering body was fast failing, the mind was instinct with life, clear and definite, not of earth, but of heaven. There no longer existed a doubt of dear father's entrance into the light, its radiance fell on the calm brow, and shone from the soft eyes, while from the pale lips, so long sealed and silent, came words of happiness and cheer to comfort us, his children.

There was no exuberant joy, only the calm, quiet peace in believing, in the knowledge of sins forgiven and of a loving Saviour's continued presence, the firm rest of faith, the gladness of feeling the feet upon the Rock after the long, dreary battle with the waves of unbelief. "*I know*," that was the language of his eyes, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth. *I know* that He is with me, and in this valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil."

Gussy was at last beginning to see how near the end was approaching, but he bitterly rebelled and fought against the knowledge with all his strength of

will. "Why should it be?" he continually asked. "Why should not father live to his three-score-and-ten, like other men? Where was the potency of medicine, if it failed to touch internal diseases?" He railed against the doctors, and would not believe that it was the will of God that the beloved father should be taken from his children. He would listen to no words of love, or comfort, or chiding. "It was wrong," he insisted, "in every way wrong, a bitter wrong!"

Father saw it at last; it was scarcely wonderful that he did, for my poor brother found it hard to repress his feelings even in his presence. He saw that his young son's warm heart was wrung with bitter feelings at the sorrow that was coming upon him, perhaps the better understanding those feelings from his own past experience; and so, one evening, when Gussy came in to see how he was, he put his thin, wasted fingers upon the young, manly hand that rested on the coverlet, and gently said,—

"It is all right, my boy, as God's ways always are. You will see it so some day."

"How can I, father? how can I?" Gussy replied, struggling with himself to repress his emotion. "It does not seem right to see you suffering so; it cannot be right that you should be taken from us like this!"

"Nay," my father quietly responded; "the wonder is that I have been spared so long, that, like the barren fig-tree as I have hitherto proved, another year, one more year, has been given to me; that He has brought me back with His own loving hand out of the dark-

ness and into the light. Yes! and for all this I shall have to praise Him to all eternity! Gussy, my son, I want you to learn this song of praise, too!" he faintly added. "He doeth all things well!"

Gussy stole away from the bedside with averted face, for father was soon exhausted, and he did not wish to distress him by allowing him to see either his grief or his inability to share his faith.

Gussy, Jenny, old Mary, and I had alone access to the sick-room, with the exception of Ernest, and the clergyman who came now and then, but had little to say, and seemed stiff and awkward in the saying of that little, and could not comprehend the entire rest and peace of the dear sufferer in the very midst of his sufferings. The doctor, of course, was in and out as frequently in the day as possible. Not that he could do anything more; he frankly told us he could not, but there was a certain strength and cheer even in his presence, and while he continued to come, even though it was only in the character of a friend, it did not seem quite such a hopeless abandonment of things. The neighbours far and wide came and went, full of sympathy and kindly interest and inquiry, but submitting to the doctor's dictum, that his patient must be left in the most perfect quiet; and so those last precious hours were passed only with his elder children around him.

As to mamma and the other children, after those final messages he never spoke of them again; I think he had left them with God. Earth and earthly sorrows, and cares, and affections seemed growing dim in the light of eternity, and as the days wore away,



this became even more manifest. His words were few and faltering, but they were all of Christ. The darkness was all gone; he was indeed realizing the truth of the promise, "At eventide it shall be light."

I still sang for him. Dear father! he loved the old, old songs of "Jesus and His love." Softly and low I sang, for my voice was hushed in the sick-room now, just modulated to the degree that the overstrung nerves could bear. Often when I watched by him in the night he would ask for one of his old favourites. The words rested him; the music soothed him; and sometimes he craved for a song when others held the watch, and he did not recognize the watchers, and they had to fetch me from my bed to sing. I have often wondered since how I could have done it, the tears blinding my eyes, and my voice quivering with emotion as it did; but I was strangely helped in those days, and I seemed to feel the touch of my Heavenly Father's hand, guiding me through all these trying scenes, and giving me strength to bear up, even though He was taking my dear earthly father from me.

"Light at eventide;" yes, up to the very last, the valley was lighted all the way, and the end came when we were least expecting it. Just the quiet calm, just the solid rest, just the entire confidence of one who feels his foothold on the Rock, and heeds not the winds that blow or the waves that beat.

It was one evening, the evening after a hot day. We had all the windows open and the curtains drawn back, to allow the soft, sweet breeze that came with

the setting sun to have free entrance. Father lay in his bed ; he had not been able to bear the transit to his couch that day ; but the drapery was all looped away, and the slight wind gently rustled the fringe of the canopy and the leaves of the Bible that lay upon the coverlet. During the heat of the morning father had been restless, but the pain had ceased ; there had been no fresh paroxysm for many hours, and we knew by the doctor's countenance that this must be a symptom of the approaching end.

"He will suffer no more," he said, pressing my hand as he passed from the room ; and so indeed it proved, for as the evening drew on he slept at intervals, lying calmly among his pillows, slept as he had not done without opiates for weeks before.

Gussy and I had taken up our places on either side the bed—our places by right. Just at sundown Jenny and her husband came in. The doctor had met and warned them of what they might expect. And silently they entered the large room, now cool with the fresh west breezes, and lighted by the rosy rays of the declining sunbeams. They placed themselves at the foot of the bed. How I wished they would not do so. It looked like what I could not yet bear to think of, that father was indeed leaving us. Jenny was quietly crying, her head on her husband's shoulder. Gussy had buried his face in one of his hands as they entered, as though he would not read the confirmation of his fears in their eyes. The other hand was in his father's clasp. As for me, all the tears were dried from my eyes, and in the hush of that room I seemed at last almost to see the golden gates

of the celestial city, and to hear the rustle of the angels' wings.

Father presently opened his eyes and smiled upon us all. "Bessie, my little girl," he whispered, "sing 'Just as I am.'"

How could I sing? My heart almost failed me, but it was not a time to choose. I softly sang through the first verse.

As I came to the refrain, "Oh, Lamb of God, I come," he raised himself on his pillow, lifting his thin hands, his dear eyes turned heavenward, as he distinctly murmured the words "I come!" Then he fell gently back, the hands lay motionless on the coverlet; the eyes were still turned heavenward, but all earthly vision had passed from them for ever.

"Light at eventide;" yes, the light lingered on the dear face, with its silver hair. Every ripple of trouble seemed flown, and when they closed his eyes, he seemed not dead but only in a peaceful slumber. Only the loving smile that rose to the lips with those words "I come!" still rested there and gave expression to that last glad surrender.

"I come!" Yes, he had done with earth and earthly care and earthly suffering, and had gone to his rest with only the plea of a Saviour's shed blood, with no doubt of his acceptance. Why indeed should he doubt? or why should we that he had entered into the joy of his Lord?

I stood at the bedside in a maze, one of the thin hands still in mine. I could not weep. I did not faint. I was only dazed and very weary; and presently Jenny led me away to my own room and helped



me to bed. And then I slept, slept as the disciples did, with sorrow, all through the night, a deep, heavy sleep. The sun was high in the heavens when I awoke, and at first I was startled, alarmed at the light that flooded the room. Slowly came the consciousness back to me of what that long, undisturbed sleep meant. The watch was over; the prisoner was free.

## CHAPTER X.

### WALKING THROUGH THE DARKNESS.

“By His light I have walked through darkness.”—JOB xxix. 3.

“I do not quite understand you, Bessie. When Sidney died you gave way so utterly that everybody thought that you would not get over it, and that we should lose you next; and since father’s death you have just taken the burden of the household upon you, have arranged everything, and managed everything, and consoled everybody, just as if you had not need of being cared for and comforted as much as anybody yourself. No, I confess I do not understand it;” and Gussy pushed forward his empty coffee-cup to be refilled, with a degree of impatience in the action that showed the state of his feelings with regard to the subject on hand.

We were seated at breakfast together in the large dining-room, Gussy and I, some weeks after father’s death. The summer had passed; the vines were changing colour; and the grapes—those that had been left ungathered—were hanging in disconsolate-looking bunches, over-ripe, and drying or shrinking

on their stalks. Only late autumn flowers were blooming in the garden, chrysanthemums, and Michaelmas daisies, and monthly roses; while the violets were again peeping out among their thick leaves, breathing out their perfume in the early morning or in the dewy evening.

Those early mornings were beginning to get chilly, and though the window nearest the table was open, admitting the sunshine and the perfume of the violets together, there was a bright little fire glowing on the hearth, where the hot breakfast cakes were keeping each other warm. We were young and did not care much for the heat of the fire, but it made the room look brighter than it would have done that chill morning without it, and when I came in alone to wait for Gussy it certainly greeted me almost like the face of a friend.

I deliberately poured out the coffee for my brother, carefully meting out the sugar and cream, thinking all the time over what he had said, but making no reply till I handed him back his cup. Then I slowly answered,—

“I hardly know whether I can make you understand the difference, Gussy.”

“At any rate you might try,” he responded dryly.

“Well then,” I replied, playing with the spoon in my cup and speaking in low, deliberate tones, “there is just this difference, the walking in darkness *without* and *with* the light. Don’t you know yourself the literal difference? Is not a road two different things in the light of day and the darkness of night, the darkness without even the glimmer of a star?”

"Well, of course, that's easy enough to see, but then—"

"Then the road is all the more difficult to follow in the dark if it is a new and untried one." I went on without heeding his interruption. "There are dangers, real and imagined; sounds that may exist, or that our own quickened senses create for us; voices in the air that may be anything else than friendly; and pitfalls for our feet, that every deep shadow conjures up, whether real or not."

"What has all this to do with the subject, Bessie? Come, I shall think you are begging the question," said Gussy impatiently. "I know very well what it is to travel a road I have never set foot on before, and in the dark too, as well as you can tell me. That is not what I want to know."

"Is it not? and yet after all it amounts to the same thing. When dear Sidney died, it came so suddenly upon me, and the trouble, the distress, the anguish rose up like thick clouds, and just shut out the light of the cross. The cross itself loomed out of the darkness, but the light was shrouded. That's how it was I gave way, and no wonder."

"Can't you speak plainly for once, Bessie? I'm an ignorant fellow, remember, and seeking for information. I understand what you mean by the *cross* well enough, but the *light* of the cross and the shrouding; there you speak in mystery."

"You don't like my metaphors, scripture metaphors too," I replied, smiling gravely. "It's simple enough, I was in dreadful trouble then, and so carried away by it that I just forgot that Jesus by His death on the



cross had not only procured life for us, thus throwing a light over the whole transaction, but that He still lived, and that *because* He lives His children must live also. I was so taken up, so engrossed with the *darkness* of the sorrow that had come upon me that I forgot the *light* that Christ Himself brought to us, to dear Sid, and to me, when He lighted our darkness, by showing Himself to us as our God, forgiving our sins, and bestowing His love upon us. I felt the violence of the blow that took my brother away, and forgot that it was a tender, loving hand that did it. I was verily walking in darkness on this untried road."

"I don't well see how it could have been otherwise," said Gussy moodily.

"It ought to have been. Had I been walking nearer to Jesus, the light of His countenance, of His presence, that very nearness would have helped me, as it did at last," I answered, the tears in my eyes. "God's word has plenty of directions for these times of sorrow and darkness, Gussy. 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?' This was my situation when Sidney died, but I forgot the injunction that followed, 'let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God'—*His name* Jesus—'He shall save His people from their sins,'—*His name*—'Wonderful! Counsellor! the Mighty God!' Oh, how could I forget it?"

"Well," said Gussy, rising and leaning on the back of his chair, "I'm pretty obtuse, but I believe I see a little what you mean, that is sufficient to account

for what I confess I did think rather strange at the time, that you should give way so much if you fully believe what you professed. But I have been more than ever puzzled since father died, because I know very well how you really loved him and felt his death."

"This is the solution to it all," I answered, also rising, "'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' It is this simple trust that does it. Without Him 'I can do nothing.' Oh Gussy, it is good to be able to stay ourselves on God; I wish you would try it. It is good to have Him to walk with in the darkness.

" 'I'd rather walk in the dark with God  
Than walk alone in the light.' "

He made no reply, but pushing back his chair, walked hastily across the room. But I saw the back of his hand dashed across his eyes as he passed into the hall; and I could not help hoping more than I ever hoped before that my young brother was seeing already the use and the truth and the beauty of having such a Friend, even though he could not yet claim Him as his.

And it was, as he said, not that I felt father's death less, but that I felt God's *nearness* more. The very darkness and night of sorrow "was light about me," because I walked not alone in it, but with Him. I cannot tell the quiet calm of those days, how He strengthened me and helped me, and how I felt I could take from His hand all that He sent me with the unquestioning trust of a little child. Yes, the very

darkness was bright with His presence, and, thank God, I am not alone in this experience ; 'such joy have all His saints.' "

There was a great revolution in some respects in our household matters ; in other respects all went on smoothly as before. Father's will was explicit enough ; and as if he had imagined what would be his wife's course of action when she heard of his death, all her share was left in specie, because readily transferable ; each child's portion being so adjusted that they could receive it only on coming of age. Jenny's share had already been received as a marriage portion ; this was thoroughly understood. The house and lands fell to Gussy and myself. Sidney had already dowered us, so that we were amply provided for, and there was nothing to do but to go on quietly as before.

Mamma's decision was quickly made, as we knew it would be. She had no desire, not a single wish to return to Australia, now that father was dead. There was nothing to come for ; it had no attractions for her, and England had everything attractive. I wonder whether it was a kind of prevision that induced her to insist on taking all the children with her ? As it was, it was better so ; they were all together and with friends.

The old home was not, however, the same ; there was a strange stillness and quiet about it, now so many of the loved ones were gone. I missed the presence of the children greatly, and sometimes, when Gussy was away, and I sat through the long winter evening alone, sewing, or reading, or writing, I wished that I could have had Maudie for a companion, warm-



hearted, impetuous, yet thoughtful Maudie. I felt strangely weary without her, and wondered if she would forget me, or whether, in the round of study, and afterwards of society into which her mother I knew would be anxious to introduce her, she would ever think of "sister Bessie" and write to far-off Australia.

There had been other changes going forward in our neighbourhood. The little chapel that lay away among the trees about a mile and a half along the road from our house had lately become too small for its congregation, while the attendance at the church had gradually dwindled away to insignificance. I had heard that it was intended either to enlarge, or to build a new chapel immediately, and one day when I rode by on my little pony, to pay a visit to a poor family who needed a little help, I found that there were a busy group of workmen, most of whom I recognized as members of the chapel, carting stone and building materials, and that the new building was really in course of erection—being, in fact, a foot above the foundations. It was in front of the old one, which was to be given over to Sabbath-school purposes.

I was glad of this, for I should be more certain of Gussy's attendance with me on the Sunday. As it was, he generally accompanied me in the evening, "because," as he said, "the house was so dreary in my absence; not because the meagre, close, overcrowded little chapel, with its very occasional supply of ministers worthy of the name, was any attraction to him." Before the winter was out the church doors were closed altogether and the clergyman had sailed

for England; so it was the little chapel or none for us, and I had determined for my part, as God had placed me over a household, that I, at least, would set the example of keeping holy day.

I stood looking at the busy group of men, all so thoroughly earnest and happy in their self-imposed work, each with his contribution of stone or timber. It made me think of the raising of the temple of old, and of the gold, and the cedar, and precious stones, the ivory, and carved work, and rich hangings of the loom—all the glad offerings of a people in thorough earnest to erect a place where God might be worshipped.

And what was I doing towards the work?

Quietly looking on, glad to see the energy and life that was manifest everywhere. But that should not be all; I resolved that my little should not be wanting when called for.

As I thought this a gentleman I had not seen suddenly emerged from behind a tree, where he had been discussing some matter respecting the building with the architect, and came across to where I stood, raising his hat as he did so, and shook hands warmly with me. It was one of the principal ministers on whose services we were dependent every Sunday.

"I did not know you had proceeded so far as this, Mr. Stoneham," I said, after exchanging the customary civilities; "I expected there would be more preliminary meetings."

"Well, it is usually so, Miss Bruce, I know," he answered brightly; "but the fact is, the brethren recognized the *immediate* necessity of enlargement,

and this being a comparatively slack season of the year, they each offered, not only their contributions of stone and wood, but also their labour, and so, as there was nothing like 'striking the iron while it is hot,' we closed at once with the offer. We shall wait upon our other friends for their contributions presently," he added, laughing.

"I shall be glad to assist with mine, Mr. Stoneham, for I also recognize the necessity of a new chapel—we have been most unpleasantly crowded of late."

"Thanks, thanks, Miss Bruce! and as there is nothing like 'striking the iron,' &c., as I observed just now," he continued, with a smile, "we have been thinking that when our new chapel is up we shall have to get a harmonium, and that will necessitate an organist. Is it asking too much for your services in this matter?"

"Not if you have no one who can better occupy the position," I replied. "I never have played in public, but I dare say I can overcome my dislike to that, if I can be of use."

"Oh, thank you, thank you; that will be a *great* difficulty overcome!" he exclaimed gladly. "May I mention this to the people? It will be an additional spur for their energy."

"Certainly!" I answered, "you are quite at liberty to do so. And you can also say, Mr. Stoneham, if you have no objection, that my contribution shall be a new harmonium," I continued, with a bow and a smile, as I turned my pony's head and galloped off without allowing him time to express his pleased surprise or utter more thanks.

So that was to be my contribution to the building



of this temple, where no fine ivory, or gold, or frankincense, or myrrh were pouring in as freewill offerings, but where the gifts were as free, and as earnest, and as glad, and all tending to the one object—the worship of God.

I had money enough; the harmonium would cost me little self-denial. Not so the position of organist. But as I stood there I had quietly counted the cost, and remembering in Whose praise I was to yield my services, I put on one side my reluctance, glad to do even this little for Him.

“As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there. All my springs are in Thee.”

So sang David; and so sang I as I went forward on the visit to my poor friends, all the better fitted for this visit by my resolve.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FOUND WANTING.

“Whoso walketh wisely shall be delivered.”—PROV. xxviii. 26.

WE had a very quiet winter, and when Gussy was away I was of necessity very much alone. Occasional calls, of course, we had; but we were in general left to ourselves, and might have drifted into an unsocial spirit, which, once attained, is so hard to overcome. But on the return of spring, with its brightness and its flowers, everything was altered. Gussy began again to bring home friends, and I was roused out of the apathy into which I was unconsciously falling, and was compelled to do my best to entertain them and please my brother.

It was certainly good for me as well as for him that we should have more society ; it was unnatural—the state of quiet into which we had fallen. During the many evenings I had passed alone that winter it was not very surprising that thoughts of the past—of dear Sidney, and of dear father—should come crowding on my quiet moments, often bringing the tears with them. I knew that with them all was right, but I was none the less lonely, and I missed them more every day, instead of less. Old Mary often looked askance at me, and suggested respectfully how much more lightsome it would be if we only invited more friends. Perhaps Gussy took the hint, or feeling the same need himself, resolved to put an end to our solitude.

Among the friends he invited, however, came Frank Miller. He had been absent some time in a neighbouring colony, where his father had taken up a large run, and had only quite recently returned home. I had not heard of his return, and one evening was therefore very sorry to see him come in with Gussy, though they were not alone, being accompanied by Harry Lorimer, the son of a wealthy stock-owner in the neighbourhood. I also had a young lady friend staying with me, Lottie Pevensy, the daughter of a solicitor residing in the nearest township, a merry lively girl of eighteen, an active worker in the church which her father attended. She was not a member, nor indeed, had she made any definite profession, but her bright face was turned Zionward, and her interests and activities were all tending that way.

Lottie was a pleasant companion for myself; but

I asked her chiefly because it made home brighter for Gussy, and I was not long in discovering that the dark eyes and rich brown hair of Lottie, as well as her lively, piquant manners, were very attractive to him, while he was by no means unattractive to her. But Frank Miller—I had not even thought of him for a long while, had no idea, indeed, that he intended to return. I fully believed that by my manner I had sufficiently repulsed him, and that he would trouble me no further. I was, therefore, greatly disappointed to find that it was not so, that he was not so readily repulsed; that, on the contrary, he was disposed to take things more than ever for granted. I was determined that this should not continue, though, unless he spoke definitely, it would be almost impossible for me to do anything more than I had already done.

I noticed, however, a change that evening, and I thought that there were symptoms of a determination to bring the matter to a conclusion by some means or other, and that he was only abiding his time.

I had occasion after tea to leave the room to give orders to the servants respecting the supper, and also a room for young Lorimer, who had arranged to sleep at our house that night, as he and Gussy intended to start for a distant station in the morning.

I had given my orders, and was returning to the parlour, where Lottie was playing and singing and contributing to the pleasure of the gentlemen, when Frank met me at the door of the little sitting-room, and asked me to grant him a moment's interview.

So it was coming out at last. The time was ill-



chosen, of course. It would not have been like Frank's usual way of action had it not been so. But there was nothing left me but to grant him the interview he asked, to be true and honest to myself and to him, and to have it all over as soon as possible.

I entered the little room. It was lighted by a single lamp; the dim light was perhaps all the more agreeable. He placed a chair for me, but I remained standing near the table, and he could do nothing less than stand too. It was a tacit way of declaring that I did not wish the interview prolonged.

"I'm sorry to seem abrupt, or to keep you away from your friends, Miss Bessie," he said, after a moment's rather awkward pause, "but I think, with your permission, it would be well that we came to a definite understanding; we cannot well go on like this."

"Pardon me, Mr. Miller," I responded, rather indignantly, "I do not comprehend you. However, this will define the position exactly: I receive you as Gussy's friend, and have always been glad to do him that pleasure."

"Something more than that after all this time, I fancy, Miss Bessie," he replied, knitting his eyebrows. "You do not surely mean to tell me that it is simply as Gussy's friend you receive me?"

"Certainly I do; I have never knowingly given you reason to think anything else, Mr. Miller. I can scarcely believe that you have."

"I have been deceived, then, that's all; for I did think that you cared for me, and that you must have known that it was not as Gussy's friend I came here

day after day a few months ago. You surely must have guessed that it was for you, and for you only, that I cared."

"If I had such a suspicion, Mr. Miller, I did my best to show you that those visits were very disagreeable to me. I never encouraged them; it was all I could do," I returned, sorry for his discomfort, and yet annoyed that any little attention I may have shown him for my brother's sake should have been so misconstrued.

"Why should the thought of my love be so displeasing?" he presently asked. "It's true and genuine. If I haven't much refinement, I'm true to the backbone in my love to you, Bessie."

"I am sorry if it is so," I answered low, but firmly, "for there is one great line of demarcation between us, Mr. Miller; you have forgotten that. The faith I love you esteem foolishness, all that I think most precious and sacred you regard with ridicule; we serve two different masters. Do you not see how entirely unsuitable we are to each other?"

"Whatever my thoughts, I should never interfere with your belief; you might have everything your own way," he broke in impetuously.

"I require something more than that in one I would esteem or love," I answered. "He must delight in the same things; there can be no happiness where the paths are divided or diverse. Unequal yoking is forbidden in God's Word, and can only bring misery."

"Then it is only the question of religion that stands between us?"

"Not the *only* question, but an insurmountable one. Mr. Miller, we are in every way very unsuited; you could never be happy with me."

"I am willing to run the risk."

"I am not. Please to consider the answer final. I can give you no other; but I do wish you well, and am sorry unwittingly to give you pain."

He turned abruptly and looked at me.

"Miss Bessie," he said, "don't you think it possible that you might win me over to what you wish? Am I so hopeless a case?"

"Certainly not hopeless. God's mercy is all-sufficient," I answered sorrowfully; "but it must be *His* love that wins you, and not *mine*, Mr. Miller. I should indeed be glad to hear such news as that."

"In that case would you listen to me?" he asked with sudden eagerness.

"No, I could not do that."

"Then *that* dream's up!" he exclaimed passionately; and seizing his hat, and without another word, he left the room and the house.

The trial was over, and very painful it had been, a great trial to me. I went into my own room, and throwing myself on the floor, beside the large arm-chair, buried my face among the cushions. I felt sorry for Frank Miller, sorry for his disappointment, even though I felt he had had so little encouragement, so little right to expect. I was sorry, too, for him as an old friend and neighbour, that he still held to the unbelief and scepticism that could only terminate in misery if it continued. And yet I was glad for my own release from attentions that were



very much opposed to my wishes. I was glad for Gussy's sake, that he would be rid of a friend holding such questionable principles. I gave thanks for the deliverance, not only for myself but for him.

I got up presently, quieted and relieved, and just at that moment Lottie came to my door, to see what had become of me.

"The gentlemen are out at the stables, looking at Mr. Miller's horse. There is something wrong with it or with him, I believe," she said, looking earnestly in my face. But if she thought I had any revelations to make, she was mistaken; and finding I was uncommunicative, she soon turned to another subject.

The next thing I heard of Frank Miller was that he had gone back to Victoria, and this time to settle there.

"I suppose you've sent him off, Bessie," said Gussy, who was my informant. "Well, you have certainly acted wisely. I would not, as I said before, have had you marry a man of his stamp for anything; but I shall miss him nevertheless."

He laughed, but received no answer, and presently went on with something else.

There could indeed be no question that I had done wisely in dismissing Frank Miller. In no case could I have accepted him. The question was, could I have done it more kindly, have spoken more decidedly of the things in which I had found him "wanting," of the terrible nature of the unbelief he held, and of the only source of real happiness? There is so much occurs to us in afterthought which we *might* have said and have not.

I lay awake that night thinking how I myself might have been found wanting in kindness, in gentleness, in courage; and yet thankful for the assurance that I might bring all my failures, all my cowardice, to my Saviour's feet, and find pardon, and that my lack of faithfulness could not hinder His work.

"Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." I bowed both head and heart together as I saw how again and again I had failed to fulfil the injunction; how, even in the daily quiet path that at present I had to tread, there were numberless pitfalls for my feet. The apostle's injunction, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," was as much needed for me as for those old-time Christians, and the same grace to uphold, the same strength to support, the same wisdom to direct was ready for me as for them.

These little clouds, so apparently insignificant as they seem, how they come between us and the light! Little household difficulties, little family differences, little jars and discomforts, trivial enough perchance in themselves, but bringing the shadow with them. Ah, how much we are the subjects of them in everyday life! In proportion as we walk in the light, in the light of a near Christ, so shall these shadows flee away. Alas! for the shadows that will come while we are surrounded by the mists of earth. By-and-by we shall rise above the mists, and then "our sun shall no more go down."

There were days of quiet after that, days in which Gussy was away, and I had much time on my hands.

In the midst of these Jenny's first baby was born, a sweet, bonny little girl, and so like dear father that I believe I loved it all the more for the likeness. I often rode over to see my sister and her baby, proud of my new title of aunt, and delighting in the soft, rosy little cherub who had come to send a thrill of gladness into all our hearts. I think Jenny herself appeared invested with new grace by her maternity. Much that was brusque had given way to a gentle softness. That babe was the poetry of the life to her that had hitherto been so practical. It was in taking up her new responsibilities too that she first began to discern a need for other and higher wisdom than her own, she first discovered her own weakness and her desire for Almighty strength. At the time this was only discernible to the watchful eye of love, for Jenny was not one to parade her feelings; on the contrary, she erred on the other side, cloaking rather than revealing. But in after-days she spoke of that time as the faint dawn of the hope in which years after she died rejoicing.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TIME'S VAGARIES.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."—ECCLES. iii. 1.

THE grass had grown green on dear Sidney's grave; even father's was covered with a thick carpet of turf and flowers. The iron railings that enclosed them had been repainted, after rough winter rains and



summer heat had passed over them; for three years had gone by since the stone was raised with its simple urn in the little country churchyard near our home, and many flowers had blossomed and faded, and bloomed again over the precious dust.

After all, it was only the dust of the casket; the jewels had long been in safe keeping. "*His* jewels," to be "counted up at the last day."

Three years! Time had passed so rapidly that it was a mere roll of days to look back upon, and yet every day had had its duties and its trials. In some respects those days had been full, for other interests had cropped up that had taken me out of myself and had made life a comparatively busy one.

Gussy and I had become greatly attached to each other. He was of a different nature from Sidney. There was not the tender nearness that existed in our sister and brotherhood—it was scarcely likely—but we, Gussy and I, were very much to each other; and I gratefully rejoiced in the influence I held over him, and I gladly laid myself out to give him pleasure and attach him to his home.

He was of a gay, rollicking temperament, full of life and health and animal spirits, running over with merriment at times. And yet there were quiet moments when a word, or a remembrance of the dead, or one of the old hymn-tunes betrayed him into a feeling which revealed that there was a craving for something more substantial than earthly pleasures, a reaching forward towards the light which gleamed through the darkness, a yearning after better things.

Of a lively, social disposition, Gussy made many

friends, and our home was no longer either quiet or dull. We frequently had visitors from Adelaide, both he and I, besides little social gatherings of neighbours—neighbours within the range of a dozen miles—and these sometimes made my housekeeping no sinecure, though with such an able assistant and cook as our Mary I managed admirably.

My path was sometimes a little difficult; so young myself, and with so many young spirits to keep in check. But then I had my Master to please, I had given myself to Him, to walk in His ways, to do His will; and though I often failed—as who among us does not?—yet I was enabled to make a stand, and to make my position known. Gussy was quite ready “to back me up,” as he said, “in all that was right and good,” and willing “to uphold Bessie’s notions of what *was* right and good” against both his own inclination and that of his guests.

“She’s the best of little sisters, always ready to do us a pleasure; and if she does leave the decanters empty, she gives us instead her sparkling sugar-beer, or her splendid coffee, so I can’t complain, and hope that you fellows will put up with it.”

I overheard this speech quite inadvertently one day, addressed to a young squatter whom my brother especially wished to honour, but who was so accustomed to what are falsely called “the pleasures of the table,” that Gussy seemed to consider some apology necessary for the absence of wine or spirits.

He came, however, so often after that, that he must certainly have found new virtue in coffee and sugar-beer, for he appeared thoroughly to enjoy them.

We had a splendid little chapel now in place of the old one, for the people had thoroughly carried out their intentions, and the work was done well, and even elaborately. I believe my presentation of a harmonium—the best I could procure in Adelaide—had much to do with the embellishment. After the opening services, which were very successful, I had been gradually drawn into the very vortex of its activities, and it did me good, as active Christian work always does. We are so prone to shrink into ourselves, and narrow down our work to things immediately around us, forgetting the injunction, "This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone."

In my position as organist I had gathered round me a choice little choir of all the best voices, far and near, Gussy among the rest. It was a really happy time we spent in our practice every week—sometimes at the chapel, often at our own house, for which purpose Gussy had bought a fine chamber organ, which he himself was learning to play. On Sunday it was no unusual thing to see the pews filled to overflowing, and even some talk of enlargement was again mooted.

Lottie Pevensy was one of our sweetest singers. She was constantly in her place. I was inclined to think that Gussy's enthusiasm had something to do with this, and to wonder rather that at present nothing further had come of it, till one evening—after a rather late practice at the chapel—when he had driven her home, my brother came into the little room where I was sitting, reading by lamplight, with such a tell-tale face that I knew at once he had something to reveal.



"Well, Gussy, what is it?" I said, half laughing, and pushing my book away. "Your face is full of revelations."

"Is it?" he answered, with a vivid blush, and a rather confused laugh, as, throwing himself into the easiest chair he could find, he turned away from the light. "It is your eyes that are so penetrating, I fancy; perhaps they see more than is revealed."

"Perhaps so. However, I am quite at leisure and quite prepared for all you have to tell me?" I added archly.

"You guess it, I suppose. Well, I do not know whether any great penetration was needed for that."

"None at all, my dear Guss, the thing was as clear as the day; but I suppose matters have come to a climax, and I may look upon little Lottie as a future sister."

"You will not be sorry to do so, will you, Bessie?" he asked in subdued tones.

"Sorry? why I would rather you had Lottie than any one else I know. She is just the very thing for you—lively, bright, and good—and will make the dearest little wife possible."

He got up and gave me a hug for that. I returned his hug with interest, but presently added rather gravely,—

"How about *your* part, Gussy dear? Lottie is a Christian. She came into the light long ago; you know that. Are you ready to support her in it?"

"Have I ever tried to hinder *you*, Bessie?" he asked reproachfully.

"Never, Gussy; you have been a dear, good

brother, upholding me in everything, yet willing to see me walking in the light alone. Is it to be so with your Lottie, dear ? ”

“ Bessie, you know I would not put a straw in Lottie’s way.”

“ I am quite sure you would not ; but do you think that is enough, either for her or for you, my brother ? Don’t you think you ought to go hand in hand together ? for ‘ How can two walk together except they are agreed ? ’ ”

“ Lottie trusts me,” said Gussy, in aggrieved tones, rising and walking to the window, and turning his back upon me.

“ Trusts you for what, Gussy dear ? I know that her loving little heart is fully yours, and that she sees in you only all that is true and good. She is not mistaken either ; I have reason to know that. Only, dear Guss, if there are two paths, one leading *to* and one leading *from* the celestial city, to be in perfect communion and fellowship, should not husband and wife tread the same ? and is there a question as to which ? ”

“ There is no question, Bessie ; but hearts are not moulded at a moment’s will. Some men take time to mature thoughts and feelings, that in others are revealed and matured at once. Surely you have read of ‘ the light that shineth *more and more to the perfect day* ’ ? ”

“ Yes, yes,” I returned, the glad tears springing to my eyes, “ ‘ the path of the just,’ a little glimmer of light at the first, but steadily and constantly increasing, till it bursts forth into the perfect day ! Ah, how beautiful it is ! ”

"Lottie discerns the little glimmer of light," said Gussy, in low, grave tones; "she is willing to trust, and wait for the full revelation."

"Oh, Gussy dear! so am I," I answered, my head drooping on his broad shoulder; "so am I, so am I! Thank God for the little glimmer—'more and more, unto the perfect day!' Yes, it will surely come, and we will pray and wait for it."

And so Gussy and Lottie's engagement was completed—an accomplished fact at last. It was the bright spring-tide again, and everything was just perfect in its beauty, as perfect as anything earthly can be. We were already in the midst of busy preparations for the approaching wedding; not indeed that there were to be any very great doings on the occasion. Lottie was, of course, to be married from her father's house. I was appointed her chief bridesmaid, while her two young sisters and a cousin completed the number. The marriage was to take place in the house, and Mr. Stoneham was to be the officiating minister, while the relatives and near friends on both sides were to complete the number of wedding guests.

"It was not to be a showy but a pretty wedding," Mrs. Pevensy had smilingly said; and we were quite acquiescent, and delighted that it should be so.

I had really nothing to do with the active preparations. Mrs. Pevensy was quite equal to those, only "my skilful fingers," as they were pleased to term them, were called into requisition, and much of the delicate needlework and artistic decorations were handed over to me.

I was sitting alone one evening, about a week be-



fore the wedding day, my fingers twining in and out amidst flowers, lace, and white satin, but my thoughts away from my work and in the distant past. It was a very still evening, just before the gloaming. The sun came softly in at the window, resting its rosy light upon the table and its delicate fabrics, falling in a misty haze over the room, and scattering its crimson glory over everything. The windows were open, for the day had been warm, and the little breeze that stole in and out was very pleasant, with its perfume-laden breath.

All at once, the murmur of voices coming towards the house aroused me. I recognized one as Gussy's, but the other chimed in with those far-off memories in which I had been indulging. What was it in those tones, clear and deep, that brought the memory of Sidney and Nina Templeton to my mind? Nina had long left the colony. She and her husband were residing on an estate in Scotland, to which he was heir; and Mr. and Mrs. Templeton, sen., with their youngest son, had followed them. The old home, the old beautiful home, had been closed some years, while Kent had been for months travelling on the Continent. Those were the tidings that from time to time reached us, recalling the past. But why should that voice so suddenly bring back all these memories so freshly to me, while the hot flush on my cheek and the beating of my heart rose and fell as I listened?

I had risen to my feet, throwing aside the ribbons and laces, as the first sounds of the voices reached me; but, recovering a little of my self-possession as the voices drew nearer, I re-seated myself, and had

taken up my work again, when the door was pushed widely open, and Gussy's hearty voice exclaimed,—

“Bessie, I have brought an old friend to see you.”

It was Kent Templeton who stood before me.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OF ONE SPIRIT.

“He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.”—PROV. x. 9.

KENT TEMPLETON ! I had heard the voice; it had recalled the past, showing indeed that in a dim sort of way I recognized it; and yet, when my brother pushed open the door and I saw him standing before me, it was with a shock of intense surprise and repulsion—repulsion not for his own sake—for what had he ever done to injure or hurt me or mine? Had he not, on the contrary, strangely shown his stern disapproval of his sister Nina's heartlessness, and attempted by every means in his power to neutralize her coquetry? I knew all this, and yet I could not help it, and the sight of him brought back all the pain and the hurt of those past days. Nina Templeton, with her fascinations and love of power, had taken my brother from me, and how could I look kindly upon her?

It was not just; it was not Christian; it was not upright; and yet I desired of all things to “walk uprightly in all things.” But these were my first impressions, and impressions so powerful that I must have betrayed them, for my lips were stiff when I attempted to speak, and for a moment I turned faint and giddy—for a moment only—till I resumed my seat;

and while Gussy, who understood something of my feelings, though he saw no reason for reciprocating or encouraging them, busily seated his guest, talking gaily to him all the while, I had a chance of recovering myself.

I had not even thought of the possibility of ever seeing Kent Templeton again. I was glad to know of the absence of the whole family from Australia and of the great improbability of their ever returning. "Glen Linn," I had only lately learnt, was sold, and this made the probability even less. But that Kent was again in the colony and had been so for the last six weeks, amidst the hurry and bustle of new interests and new ties, had never reached me.

And now he was talking quietly to my brother, smiling at his vivacious sallies, and seated very much at his ease in our little room, looking so little changed that it would have been impossible not to have recognized him. And yet there was a change, he was certainly looking older; but there was a superadded touch of refinement the travelled man nearly always acquires, and a fresh charm to the conversation which knowledge of other countries and scenes and peoples invariably brings.

Ostensibly he had some transactions with my brother, something to do with cattle. I forget what, although, with the kind intention of covering my discomfiture, he went on with the transaction in my presence, discussing the merits of various breeds and negotiating for sheep as though I had not been present. At last he turned to me with an apology for introducing his business so soon, but having heard of my brother's



approaching marriage, and knowing that unless he came immediately he should have no chance of seeing him, he had hastened the visit which otherwise would have been merely the friendly one he intended.

'This it was that he told me, that after many months of travelling he had taken farewell of his father and mother, who had comfortably and permanently settled down in their new home near Worcester, and returned to Australia with a view of finally settling. "It was the land of his birth, of his education, of his sympathies," he said, "and to him it was *home*." He felt that he owed to her all the good he had it in his power to bestow, while the wealth he had gleaned from her fair pastures, her flocks and her herds, in the green valleys or on the sunny heights, and the little ability God had given him to use in His service belonged of right to his native land. "Glen Linn" had indeed passed into other hands, but since his return to Adelaide he had been fortunate enough to secure "The Cedars," a lovely place about ten miles distant from our house, a place which of course we had heard of, if we had not seen it. The house was very attractive to him, being built in much the same style as "Glen Linn;" and as he had secured much of his father's furniture, in addition to what he had brought from England and the Continent, he was already making a pleasant home, under the supervision of the old housekeeper who had been many years in his family, and who had accompanied his father and mother to England, but who, in extreme disgust at the cold and changeable climate of the old country, had gladly welcomed the offer to return with Kent

and undertake his household. In this home he said he should soon be ready to receive his friends.

We sat up till late, very late that night. There was so much to converse about, so much of interest to us all, especially so to me ; for after a time we fell into quiet talk of dear father, and then of Sidney, of all that was lovely in their lives and peaceful in their deaths. Kent had so much to recall of his memories of those college days together. It did me good to listen as he spoke of many an act of kindness done, of many a generous yielding up of his will for the good of others, so quietly done that it was a thing to be felt, not to be talked about, of the love which most of his old companions cherished for the memory of dear old Sid. I think he dwelt upon all these little incidents principally for my sake. I know he did, for he went on to speak of circumstances occurring in later days, since the unhappy experiences of "Glen Linn,"—and upon those he never even glanced—of days of which I had heard nothing, how, while he had been struggling after the light, dear Sid had been urgently influencing others in the sacred search, seeking to win souls for the dear Saviour he was so earnestly desiring to find himself.

"A proof that he had indeed found Him long before he knew it," Kent continued impressively, his whole countenance aglow with the thought. "His eyes were 'holden,' as were those of the two mourning disciples on their way to Emmaus, and yet Jesus was 'talking with him by the way.'" He turned a wistful glance at me as he concluded. My eyes

that met his were eager and wet with fast-falling tears.

After this all feeling of repulsion vanished. I forgot his sister, and thought only of himself and his words. How could I do otherwise with one who could speak so feelingly of my brother—of the many little incidents in his past with which I was unfamiliar, and who seemed so glad to draw on his memory for my pleasure, so happy in the remembrance.

I found, too, in talking to him, that there was still the same earnest, loving faith inciting all his movements that had astonished Sidney in the old time. He was still “walking uprightly,” and therefore “surely,” no doubt, no uncertainty about it; his aim was to live a “higher life,” to live nearer to Christ, that he might work better for Him.

We had a quiet little talk of this kind after breakfast next morning, while Gussy was absent among his men giving necessary orders. I was gently enticed into the detail of all the difficulties I found in my Christian work, in which his sympathy and advice were a strength in themselves. It was so long since I had experienced any help of this kind; for strange indeed it is that even among Christians these subjects are but rarely introduced. No wonder that we are lonely and chill in our isolated paths; for even with the light of our Father upon us, the light of Christian fellowship is good, and even a *word* may lead to a train of thought and consequent action which the utterer of that word may never know. It is the little spark that kindles the fire, and by a little spark of a word most frequently is



the "One Spirit" revealed. Like the sign of freemasonry, it shows we are akin.

But we had each our separate paths to go, our several duties to perform—Kent, my brother, and myself. Just now they were rather exciting and engrossing ones for us, and Kent had his distant stations to visit, which hitherto more pressing engagements had prevented his doing. So we parted, but not without his having asked and obtained permission to come again.

The next few days passed rapidly, and Gussy's wedding morning was ushered in by the beautiful bright weather we often enjoy before summer asserts its power—with sun enough to ripen the fruits, and breeze sufficient to temper the heat of the sun and bring out the perfect perfume of the flowers. Bride could never have experienced a more auspicious day.

It was a pleasant home—"The Pines," where the Pevensys resided, lying just out of the township and away from the office, and in a bowery garden with a wide lawn and flower-beds in front, particularly distinguished by a number of magnificent arum lilies. It was a long, low structure, which none but the initiated would imagine to be principally of wood, for the broad verandah that swept all round the house was covered with a well-kept drapery of closely trimmed dolycas, always green, and handsomely arched before every window and doorway, while stucco and paint had also completely concealed any suspicion of woodwork anywhere.

I liked Mr. Pevensy ; he was a pleasant man and genial in his manners, notwithstanding his profession

—the law—with which profession a certain idea of shrewdness and sharp practices is associated, which do not seem quite congenial with our notions of friendliness, whatever proofs we may sometimes have to the contrary. On the morning of his daughter's marriage he was especially agreeable with everybody. It was easy to see that it met with his entire approval, even from a mere worldly point of view, and his wife, though she was half smiles and tears, was as fully rejoicing in the occasion as himself. Gussy was in every way an excellent match for their child.

Everything was in beautiful order. We had draped the drawing-room with white flowers, among which the groups of orange blossoms here and there breathed their rich perfume. They looked lovely amidst the delicate foliage of mingled pines and acacias, which we had gathered from the adjacent scrub and garden.]

All three windows—French windows they were—looking out upon the verandah were widely open, admitting the gentle breeze that rustled the lace of the curtains and playfully lifted Lottie's bridal veil as she entered the room on her father's arm.

A pretty little delicate bride she looked as she stood by the side of her tall, stalwart husband, her bright eyes downcast, and the customary smiles on her lips toned down by the solemnity of the vows she was about to take. To my mind Gussy had never looked so handsome. It was a "pretty wedding," a very pretty wedding, as Mrs. Pevensy had promised it should be, and Mr. Stoneham made the ceremony as sacred and impressive as an act involving a whole life's happiness demanded. Tears as

well as smiles, of course, were there, for what young girl, leaving home for a new life and an untried path, even with one she loves, can do so without the memory of the loved ones she is leaving throwing a little shadow over her joy ; or what mother, yielding up her child to another, can do so without experiencing a little pain at the severance of the dear old ties that bound mother and child together ! But the deed was soon performed, and the tears soon followed by smiles, and the wedding breakfast that succeeded the ceremony was all that it should be, quiet, lovely, and perfect in its arrangements.

Then little Lottie laid aside her lace veil and bridal robes, and simply attired in a dark travelling costume, drove off from the old home with her happy young husband, amidst a shower of rice and old slippers, the old-time precursor of happiness ; amidst, also, I believe what was still better, the earnest prayers of some of us, that "of one spirit" these two might walk, and in *one* way, and that that way might always and only be "In the light."

Our young groom, Ned, came early in the evening with my pony, as I had ordered him. I wanted to be quiet and alone, to think and to pray ; for, whether it was that I was not well, or that I was wearied out with over-excitement, I scarcely know, but I yearned for my own home and for our Mary's loving attendance, and notwithstanding entreaties and expostulations, I went off in the very midst of the merriment, much of which, though very uncongenial to me, was innocent in itself. I rode quietly home through the moonlight, accompanied



by my young attendant, and was soon in the seclusion of my own bedroom, alone for the night.

Everything seemed doubly still after the noise and hilarity and excitement of the day, and yet it was very pleasant to me. I lay on my pillow looking out through the parted curtains at the soft moonlight that fell over everything, glad to think that my brother was so happily married, and devising all sorts of plans to improve the house and prepare for the return of bride and bridegroom.

Should I be in the way? I did not think so. I was to retain my own rooms, and to have perfect freedom over the rest of the house. But I did wonder if I should not feel at times shut out in the cold, in spite of all Lottie's winning kindness and Gussy's brotherly love—it was in the nature of things that it should be so; and then a little yearning stole over me for a companionship in which there should be “One spirit,” where the hopes, and aspirations, and labour should be *one*.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HAND IN HAND.

“Walking in newness of life.”—ROMANS vi. 4.

WINTER again, wild and stormy. The trees of our garden were many of them shorn of their leaves. The cedars lifted bare branches to the leaden sky, but the lawns were green with the heavy rains, and there was abundant promise of much beauty when the cold and dreary winter season had passed.

Even in the winter there was much that was lovely

about "The Cedars," and I loved the place in its every aspect, for it was now my home, and had been so for many months. Even while I half unconsciously yearned after it, the companionship I so desired and so needed was not far distant; and Kent and I were truly of "one spirit," walking in one way.

There was nothing marvellous in this new phase of our friendship. It came about very simply, and almost unconsciously, as I said, on my part. I never knew till long after that thoughts of me had strengthened his resolve to settle in his native land, that the hope of winning me had hastened his return, and cut short the continental tour he had been so thoroughly enjoying till that thought came, and then he said to himself, "If she will give herself to me, we can finish our travels together at any future time and at our leisure. If I can only find her as I left her, a simple-hearted Christian and with no other claim on her love, and I can gain her heart, it is all I need."

And so, with this purpose he had come, but so nicely concealed beneath the garb of friendship that as a friend only we had received and welcomed him.

And then followed many days, many happy days of talk and companionship; for "The Cedars" were only a pleasant ride from our house, and Kent was an admirable horseman. He was with us every Sunday after Gussy's and Lottie's return home, sometimes at our house, sometimes with us at Jenny's. Other people, looking quietly on, saw what for a long time I scarcely suspected—that, being "of one spirit," there could be but one result. But they were wise

enough to let things take their course, and that "course," under such judicious treatment, for once "ran smoothly."

It was one evening, just at the gloaming. I had been singing for Kent a favourite hymn of his, and of mine—"Nearer, my God, to Thee." How the words seemed to thrill my very soul as I uttered them! There was a great hush in the room as I rose and walked to the window, and stood looking out at the half crescent of a moon that was very dimly throwing its light among the shadows of the trees. In and out of the shadow I could see Gussy and his wife walking "hand in hand" up and down the well-worn paths. Little stars were twinkling here and there; the rest was dark, blue immensity. How far off heaven seemed, and one's heart's cry was, "*Nearer!* NEARER!" I stood with clasped hands, looking out.

Presently Kent Templeton rose, and crossing the room, stood by my side.

"A *near* Christ—that is what we both want," he said, with a deep breath, in continuation of the theme of the song.

"One seems so far off at times, amidst the bustle, and cares, and pleasures of this life," I answered in a low voice, still looking upwards at the dark blue dome above me, with its points of light here and there, twinkling in and out in matchless beauty.

"The mists of earth—yes, they do hide Him from us; but 'This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we *have* the petition that we desired of Him.'



Now, do you not think that our desire for greater nearness to Himself, for more of His sensible presence on our daily journey, must be in accordance with His will, and that we shall have it if we only ask ? ”

I could not answer ; my heart was too full, and my throat throbbed so painfully with suppressed tears, that the words would not come.

“ Bessie ! ” he presently said, and there was a thrill of deep emotion in his own voice now. “ Do you think our walk would be less in the light if we go along ‘ hand in hand ’ together ? Do not you think we might strengthen and encourage one another, bringing to mind by mutual sympathy the tenderness and love of our Lord, even should our pathway be overshadowed by clouds for a time ? Am I asking too much of you ? Am I presuming too much ? ”

How can I tell what I answered ? What does it signify as to the words ? or whether indeed there were words or not ? It is enough that he understood the hand that I simply placed in his. It was taken in both his with a quick, glad pressure. And then in the dim shadow of the gloaming we knelt down together in the window, the quiet stars looking on, and gave ourselves up to each other and to God.

“ Hand in hand ” we have gone on since that memorable evening ; not without our crosses, or even our cares, for earth has no perfect bliss. But we were journeying *one road, together* “ walking in the light,” and encouraging each other in seasons of darkness, from which even the brightest lives are not exempt. Kent and I, “ hand in hand,” were very happy in our lives and work.

"More and more, unto the perfect day." That has been fulfilled for Gussy. A grand fellow-worker he has proved, all the more so, perhaps, by that bright, bold, happy spirit of his, that *attracted* instead of *repelled*. Gussy became a very happy, earnest Christian, one to whom no work came amiss, so that it was for Christ or the advance of His kingdom. He walked truly in the light—upright in all his ways—and showed forth its brightness; and little Lottie, bright and happy, too, was a lovely helpmeet for him.

After all, good as these dear earthly fellowships are, we need our Father's hand every step of our way. We need to be reminded that "He is our Light," and that without Him our path would be dark and our steps would falter, in spite of all our loved ones could do to help us. It must be "Jesus only" from first to last—He, *Himself*—our Light!

THE END.





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