

THE SUNDAY AT HOME

O DAY MOST CALM, MOST BRIGHT! . . .
THE WEEK WERE DARK BUT FOR THY LIGHT.—*Herbert.*



LOOKING BACKWARD

LOOKING BACK.

"Youth winna return, nor the days of lang syne."

SIR WALTER SCOTT, in his recently-published journal, gives a delightful sketch of a day spent at a little sea-side village, whither he had been carried in childhood by a kind maiden-aunt for a course of sea-baths. A lifetime separated the first visit from the last, but the old man saw this little world again with the wide-eyed observant gaze of childhood to which everything is wonderful, and yet nothing too wonderful to be impossible.

Here is the cottage, remembered at once with a breathless impatience of recognition: the owners, who took in these summer lodgers, are vanished and dead; but the house remains unchanged, a poor little place, he owns now with a grudge, though it looked grand enough long ago, dignified and distinguished by the big black arch that let out upon the sea. Here, too, the kirk where it was so difficult for a small listener not to fall asleep under the prosing of the reverend doctor who gave such bountiful measure in the way of sermons; the links, where the treasures of sea-shells were arranged on the turf, and the toy-ships went forth to voyage over those mimic inland seas that the tide had left behind. As if by magic, too, springs up the semi-pathetic, semi-ludicrous figure of the veteran half-pay officer, who swaggers in his solitary walk upon "the parade," as he calls the little open space by the pool where the boy plays. And here is old George Constable, a mysterious visitor who came very often to the cottage in those long-gone summer days, and is now surmised to have been dangling after the kind aunt, a humble, but rejected suitor no doubt; and here the blithe face and the merry laugh of the pretty good-natured girl, "my Mary Duff, whom I laughed and romped with and loved as children love." A little way off is Preston Tower, with its bountiful garden full of "berry" bushes, where a little lad was allowed unlimited feasts, and as the old eyes look again on the rugged keep, the old heart once more goes pit-a-pat with the childish thrill of fear lest Blind Harry's spectre should show his headless trunk at one of the twilight windows.

So the past unrolls itself again: it is like a morning dream, vivid and clear, from which one awakens with a smile. The great Sir Walter, full of fame and years and honours, calls it a happy day thus spent among by-gone memories, a day of relaxation and of pleasure. For a while it was good to cast off the responsibilities and burdens of maturity and be again the little care-free laddie, sporting in life's happy morning.

It is to old age specially that this gift of revivifying the past belongs: the aged alone look back with pleasure; a mist veils and obscures the recent years, but for them the long-ago is always fair. Middle-aged eyes see too

clearly, the landscape of childhood is still too near, one has not got far enough away from it; there are dark places in the picture: shadows, clouds, the mists still linger there, it is not all clear shining. Time has not yet cast its halo, its softening glamour, over the scenery of youth, so that all that was ugly and bald is blotted out and only the beautiful remains.

One sometimes smiles at old folk when, with a shaken head, they assert that the world is no more what it was; no longer the good and kindly and comfortable planet of yore. The world, perhaps, is much the same as it always was, though one would fain hope that it grows wiser as it grows in centuries; much the same for you and me who enter it, one at this stage, and one at that. No portion of the journey of life, even the earliest, is without its alloy of pain and grief, its sharp lessons of disappointment; but instead of laughing at the backward glance of dim eyes which see the past as through a veil softly, should we not rejoice in the kindly illusion? It is one of God's tenderest gifts to old age. He draws His mists across the time of toil and struggle and strife. The battle-time, the anguish and stress that come with the working days, are forgotten, or only dimly remembered; while every happy thing that made youth happier is a possession for always.

In Sir Walter's own Border country, there died the other day one who remembered him in his gallant prime. She was ninety-five when we laid her under the snows, a long time to have lived, and yet not long enough for the many who feel the world the poorer for lack of her peaceful, placid presence. Brought up all her days in that storied country-side, something of its charm and mystery laid its spell on her. Born there, living there as a girl, long years as a wife, many as a widow, she knew and loved all the romantic lore with which every hill and dale, every knoll and burn is dowered. She spoke—and was proud to speak—the beautiful pure old Scotch, the Scotch of the Ettrick Shepherd, of Burns, of Sir Walter himself—one never hears it nowadays—which has a lilt of music in it. Ballad and song and story, she knew them all by heart, and to hear her talk in her simple, graphic way was to be made free to the best of good company.

For many a day, ever since she took the honours of old age upon her, she was "great-grandmother" to all who were privileged to count her friend. Her circle outside her own kin was wide, and she never forgot even the newest of those who claimed a share in her interests. Yes, she was "Granny" to one and all, the kindest, the gentlest, the lovingest of souls. And dearly did she love what she called a "crack." Her coaxing, "Sit ye down—bide a bit," could never be resisted. The little affairs of to-day would be discussed—

yours even more keenly than her own; she was proud of her beautiful rose-garden, and eager, when she could no longer walk, or even be wheeled in it herself, to hear what new wonder had blossomed there at the kiss of the sun. One was glad to be her messenger—to be eyes for her as one wandered in those beautiful green glades that sloped so warmly to the south, while across the valley the purple hills drew near. Her simple delight in every green thing that grew was a pleasure to see. To the last an interview with her old gardener was counted among the events of the day. But soon in those pleasant talks, that grew all too short as time went on, her mind would slip away from the present to the long-gone past, where it felt itself truly at home. Her eager "You'll mind" so and so, always awoke a smile: no, we could not "mind" the stirring events that happened when the century was new-born, but though the figures that flitted through those pleasant reminiscences had long since vanished from this earth, their voices silent many a year ago, she made them live again for us; they walked the streets of the quaint little town, they played their dramatic parts, and were more real, perhaps, than those who shared our own day and generation.

Latterly it was with something of an effort that she was recalled from this enchanted country peopled with the dead, and one always had a dread lest memory should outstrip the bounds one longed to set it, and awake too fully. For she had had great sorrows, griefs and trials in her lot: one cannot have the loving heart she had, and live to be so old, and yet not be often wounded. But she had always borne her adversities with courageous fortitude and calmness and patience; and now in the late gloaming, when the burden and heat of the day were over, they seemed to have no more power to hurt. From the present, so full of kindly, simple interests, she slipped away to the early days when a glory was still upon the world; and all the toil-worn pilgrimage between was put aside as a fancy of the night-watches which one forgets on awaking.

She saw four generations grow up around her, and for the last little new-comer the kind heart had just as warm a welcome as for the first; but to her, her own children, though they were white-headed men and women, were always the "bairns" still, and her husband, dead in his early manhood, was never anything but "their feyther." Almost to the last she was able to sit at her double-paned corner window, which was never without a glass of flowers, and from which she could see the slopes of her garden, the shining river, and heather-clad hills beyond; and to the very last she could read the large printed Gospel bound up in small portions so as not to be too heavy for weak hands. She was "sair failed" in body, but never in mind, and her heart was young to the very end. There was to have been a little family festival on her birthday, but she was not able for it. "Eh, my woman," she said to one of her many descendants, who spoke of this eventful day, "birthdays are queer, queer things at my age." And the far-off look came into

her eyes as if already she saw across the border line that divides time from all time. Very peacefully, and with scarce a pang of suffering, as the many who loved her had wished that it should be, she slept one night and awoke to a new youth in another life than this.

Does it seem that one has lingered unduly on the record of a life that was after all very ordinary and uneventful, with nothing but the common cares and sorrows to burden it, and just perhaps a little more serenity and patience in bearing them that one always meets?

It may be so, but, on the other hand, the spectacle of an old age, so placidly cheerful, so wholesomely sweet, has its lesson and its consolation. We, too, may come to the goodly rest of Beulah's Land when the march in the dust and heat is over; we, too, if to be full of years is our portion, may be centres of loving influence and kindly interest, linking youth and age. In feebleness and weakness the best may still be left, "the last of life, for which the first was made."

When one is young it seems so impossible ever to be anything but young. Life goes round like a charmed circle, there is always as much time before us as lies behind. Youth cannot bring home to itself that it is mortal; one knows it of course, as one knows so many accepted facts that pass unchallenged. Life is brief, and we must all die. We repeat the formula with the lips. Sometimes when a comrade falls at one's side, one realises with a shock and jar that this is something more than a mere truism. But the march goes on; the closed grave is left behind; for you and me, at least, in the prime of our strength, in the hey-day of our youth, Death will tarry awhile.

But, as the years lessen, as one and another goes from us to learn the great secret, as the gaps grow wider in the ranks of friendship, the vast distance betwixt life and death shortens too; we can no longer deceive ourselves, or bid the grim messenger defiance.

Every age, they tell us, has its pleasures and its compensations; but few will deny that, in life, as in nature, the middle hour of the day is the most trying. The freshness, zest, supreme belief of morning have left us; twilight peace is as yet far off. In the glare and the dust the hottest of the fight falls to us. It is then we struggle most, then we entertain the most exaggerated ideas of our own importance, then we strive unceasingly to improve our worldly position.

Ambition is awake, passions are at their keenest, the world exercises its strongest spell. Let the battle be fierce as it will, death was never more unwelcome. We are in love still with "this green earth, the face of town and country, the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets." The stir, the fret, the fever, these have still their charm; it is life, and yet more life, we crave, not death.

But how beautifully, how tenderly, as the years slip away, is the heart weaned from this

thirst to live; the hands grow weary of the endless task, and fall at the side; the feet are no longer swift, the back is bent, nature by little and by little saps the strength; and rest, taken grudgingly at first, comes to be sweet. The last lesson of all is set, the learning not to do.

I am no longer eager, bold, and strong:
All that is past;
I am ready not to do
At last, at last!
My half day's work is done,
And this is all my part:
I give a patient God
My patient heart.

These lines, it is related in the diary of Louisa M. Alcott, were found under the pillow of a wounded soldier who died in hospital; but they are equally applicable to the slow decline of life, when the grasshopper becomes a burden and desire fails, because the hour for going to the last home draws near.

But, the surrender once made, old age once frankly accepted, the mortifying circumstances attendant upon the sad process fade away. "It is difficult to grow old gracefully," said one who surely showed us how it ought to be done. A little courage at the outset, and it is accomplished. Accept the white hair, the bowed back, the feeble limbs, the failing sight and hearing; take them as God's voice whispering, "Make ready for My summons;" and the last of life may indeed be still the best; the evening hour of rest the most blessed of the day.

The love and the respect that age, when it is truly to be revered, gathers about it, the wise

counsel it may give, the patience it may teach, are these not worth the striving for? Old age does not always earn respect; sometimes it has discharged the offices of life but lamely, and wins no honour in the closing scenes. It is querulous, fretful, discontented, still rebelling against God's decree; but where it humbly accepts His chastening, how good and how beautiful it may be, how helpful to those of us for whom its peace is as yet far off! Serene, cheerful, the frets and the cares all over, just as the memory goes back to the scenes of youth, so the spirit becomes child-like too; the early simplicity, the early faith, awake again, and at last like a weaned little one, the tired eyes close and the head is pillowed on the lap of our common mother.

Even if sorrow shadow the gloaming, it is not worth while to grieve overmuch. The tears will soon be wiped away, the sorrows mended. God takes care of that. He may not make it possible for us to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" He may not will that we should say it; but as one tie after another is broken, link after link snapped, the heart may cry in all truth, "There is none upon earth whom I desire beside Thee."

And if to be patient, biding His call, even upon a lonely earth, loving, helpful, brave to the very end—if these are the privileges of old age, who would dread its on-coming? Who would not rather ask that this evening hour might be granted, as a last rich opportunity of paying back to others part of the debt of love. Love, which has blessed every step of the long way, and will bless it to the end.

L. E.

TOM HERON OF SAX.

A STORY OF REVIVAL TIMES.

BY EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN.

CHAPTER V.—THE LADIES OF ERNSCLIFF.

"LADIES, I have come to you to take counsel. I have come to you for advice."

The speaker was a thin, spare man of about forty summers, attired in clerical garb, somewhat threadbare, though spotlessly neat and clean. He had an intellectual face, with a sweet and thoughtful smile; whilst the hectic flush upon his cheek and the slight stoop of his tall figure suggested the idea of frail health and the insidious advance of pulmonary disease.

This individual was none other than Mr. Latham, the Curate of Sax, put in by Rector Fortescue, who held the living. Although a scholar and a man of gentle birth, his ill-health obliged him to live very quietly and in the pure air of the country. Small as was the stipend allowed him, he contrived to live in fair comfort, the lodger of a widow woman, whose cottage was

situated half way between the village of Sax and the hamlet around Ernscliff; and he was far more at home at the house of the ladies of the latter place than in any other house in his parish.

The ladies, who were in their pleasant summer parlour, the oriel windows of which overlooked from a considerable height the river of Erne and a stretch of wooded country beyond, welcomed the curate with gentle courtesy; and from the way in which he seated himself in a high-backed easy chair, and drew it a little forward to be nearer them, it was plain that he was no unfrequent guest in that sunny room.

"The best counsel that we have is always yours to command, dear sir," answered Mary with a smile, "but it is rather we who need counsel from you—our spiritual adviser and pastor."

The clergyman's thin face lighted pleasantly at

these words. It was not in many houses that his office was thus acknowledged and respected. A poor curate was a person of small importance in those days in the eyes of the bulk of his parishioners. Carelessness in religious matters, latitudinarian doctrine, good-humoured scepticism, were all the fashion of the day, combined with the laxity of morals and the low standard of spiritual discipline which always must accompany the deadening influence of an age that attempts to put aside the Word of God, and set up in its place the discoveries and the doctrines devised by man. The clergy largely shared the prevailing scepticism of the age. True indeed it is that champions such as the immortal Bishop Butler had appeared to fight upon the side of truth: but the general spirit was one of careless levity, or of something worse; and in many parishes throughout the kingdom the very clergy themselves were foremost in the ranks of those who lived for sport of all kinds, who drank and gamed, swore and gambled, attempted nothing save the perfunctory duties of Sunday, and left their flock throughout the week to take care of itself as it might.

Many and bright as were the exceptions to so low a standard of rule and discipline, there could be no doubt that the clergy were held in considerable contempt at this time. People might not desire faithful shepherds, but they were ready enough to condemn those who occupied this position because they were unfaithful. A wealthy, fox-hunting, jovial parson, who lived the life of an ordinary country gentleman, was often popular enough in his parish: but the poorer men, and particularly the curates in charge, were very slightly treated. Mr. Latham, whose saintly life and consistent Christian walk had impressed even the roughest of his parishioners, had not gained, even at the end of fifteen months of hard work, that respect which now would be accorded him almost as a matter of course at the outset. His predecessors had been men of a very different stamp, and a new man with new ways was regarded with suspicion. It was thus very pleasant to him to hear himself spoken of as a pastor and friend by gentle Mrs. Mary.

"You have doubtless heard something of what occurred at Hownston last Sunday? A stonemason attempted to preach in the market place and was pulled down by—I regret to have to say it—by Tom Heron of Sax, instigated, I fear by those who should have known better what was due to any man coming in the Name of all names. To-day I was summoned to Rookwood by the Squire's lady. She told me that she was greatly annoyed by the near approach of these Methodist preachers, and was resolved they should never obtain any footing in Sax. But her especial charge to me was that next Sunday morning I should preach in the church here a sermon in condemnation of itinerant preachers and their doctrines. She bids me not spare them, but hold them up to ridicule and reprobation. She intends to command the whole village to attend the service and listen to the discourse, and bids me couch my sermon in very plain words, easy to be

understood, that all may learn how evil a thing these 'new doctrines' are."

Mary looked up from her embroidery with an expression of keen interest in her eyes, whilst old Mrs. Ernscliff—a lovely old lady whose very face was enough to tell to those who could read its signs aright, of a soul living very close to Heaven—raised her calm blue eyes with a sweet smile in them, and looked across the sunny valley, as she softly said:

"See how these Christians love one another."

"What shall you do?" asked Mary breathlessly.

She did not exclaim in astonishment at hearing that Madam had issued such an order to the clergyman. Astonishing as such a thing would be in these days, it was nothing very unwonted then. The curate was looked upon something in the light of a servant—a paid servant of the Rector, or of the Squire of the place: and in Sax, where the Fortescue influence was all-pervading, there was nothing very strange in its exercise even over matters spiritual.

"I said that I would think about it," answered Mr. Latham, a slight flush upon his pale face: "I fear that Madam understood me to say that I would think over what I could say that would be most scathing, for she dismissed me graciously, and said that she and all her household would be there to hear me next Sunday morning, and all the village as well. I bowed and retired. I had nothing more ready to say to her. It is to you I have ventured to come for counsel and advice."

Mary's face wore that expression of bright gravity which bespoke a vivid interest and wide intelligence.

"It might be a noble opportunity for teaching the people," she said, "for they would listen if they thought that it was to be an attack on the Methodists. But you could hardly make it that, I trow, dear sir: by what I have understood you to say, you look upon their work as a noble one—done in the service of God?"

"I do," answered the clergyman earnestly, "I truly believe that in these men the Spirit of God is working. As I have said again and again, what they teach is no new doctrine—it is the doctrine which we churchmen hold—or ought to hold by the very vow we made at our ordination. I know well that, when Mr. Wesley and his brother went forth to teach and preach, they no more meant to stir up strife and to be called the enemies of the church than I do myself. Of their doings and their doctrines of late years I know less. There are times when, from what I hear, I fear that they may have somewhat fallen from their first standpoint—that they—urged doubtless thereunto by their followers, who have but too good cause to feel themselves outcasts from the Established Church—have commenced to form themselves into a body, a society, an organisation, which in time may lead them to a formal schism. I hear they have built chapels—I will not say this is wrong: but if they draw away from parish churches those who would otherwise go there, and fix their services at the church hours, if they gradually lead their followers to think that if they are Methodists they are not also

members of the Established Church—though of the church universal they must and will always remain—if above all things they, in days to come, begin to call themselves after the name of a man, after the fashion of many bodies—then and without doubt there will be made by their means another schism in the Catholic Church, rending the Body of Him, who longs to see His Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing—that He may present it faultless to His Father as His holy Bride.¹ It is this that I dread to see—this that I pray may not take place. It may be that it will be our doing if it does—we will not hear the Spirit of God speaking in these men—we drive them forth from among us, and they, half of necessity, half out of despite—for we are all frail human beings, and subject to passions of wrath and jealousy—go forth, shaking off the dust from their feet, and return no more to us, but become in a certain sense of the term our adversaries and opponents. Yet we are all the servants of one Master—called by His sacred Name, baptised into His Body—heirs of His kingdom. Oh, it is a sorrowful, sorrowful thing to think of! How can Christ ever come in glory to claim His Bride, when she is thus divided—rent in pieces, engaged in warring with her own children, when she should be preparing herself to meet Him, when He comes to call her. Oh, if we were but living in that one hope, as were the Apostles and Christians of old, we should forget to differ and quarrel one with another: we should have our hearts and eyes so firmly fixed above—waiting and watching for Him, who assuredly will one day come in glory, that we must ever be walking in love and unity below, bound closer and closer together in the bonds of that love and hope which we are so prone to forget and to put aside.”

The thin face of the clergyman had caught a strange radiance as he spoke. His hands had unconsciously clasped themselves together, his eyes shone with a vivid light. Something of the same look was reflected in the countenances of the two ladies. And Mary cried impulsively:

“Ah, if you could but teach our people that lesson! Oh, why do we not love one another more? Can you not preach that doctrine to us on Sunday?”

As this question was asked, recalling the subject from which the talk had strayed, the light faded somewhat from the face of Mr. Latham, and he sighed a little as he said:

“I must think, and pray for guidance in this matter. I will preach nothing that shall disgrace my Christian calling and profession—nothing that shall teach men that servants of the same Master must be enemies of one another. I came to you for sympathy—and I know I get it in

full measure. I would not willingly offend any man—not the poorest of my flock. I would not willingly vex Madam, or seem to disregard her wishes. There is some reason in her opposition, some truth in her bitter words, and I may not deny it. Yet I would I could bring her and others to see that beneath the rough and imperfect outer shell, lies a kernel of priceless truth. Again I would seek, had I the chance, to strive and show these brethren of ours, who are so nobly fighting the battle of Christ, that they stand something in danger of holding so fast on one portion of Catholic truth that they lose sight of others. I would have them be content with affirming what they hold, and beg them to leave denials alone. In God’s Word there are so few negatives—almost all that men affirm may be found in some form there: but men will take that Word piece by piece, and in affirming one great truth, deny the supplementary truths which are accessory—as notably in the doctrine of Justification. But I weary you with my discourse. I always find such rest and peace in coming here with a difficulty. It seems of itself to smooth itself away in this quiet room. But I must say farewell now. I have many duties pressing upon me to-day.”

A little more talk and the clergyman was gone, having, as was so often the case on his visits, done most of the actual talking himself, and yet gone away refreshed and strengthened. Old Mrs. Ernscliff looked after him with a smile in her eyes, and said in her gentle way:

“Methinks in you good man the Spirit of God is truly working. Had we more like him, our world would be a brighter, holier, happier place than it is. I trust we may keep him long amongst us yet.”

“If he offends Madam Fortescue, I fear she will never let him stay,” said Mary doubtfully.

“I was thinking of something different, my dear,” said the old lady “I sometimes feel, as I look into his face, that he is one of those upon whom God has set a seal, and that He will call him to some work elsewhere, of which we know nothing. If he should lose the curacy of Sax, I think we would yet ask him to remain amongst us. He has done more for our poor people at Ernscliff, than has ever been done for them before.”

Visitors appeared to be the order of the day at Ernscliff this bright afternoon. Hardly had these words passed Mrs. Ernscliff’s lips, than the door was once more thrown open and the butler announced in loud tones, “Miss Fortescue.”

Mary looked up, half expecting to see Irene, but the tall and blooming girl advancing into the room was a very different plume of dazzling whiteness. The girl’s dark eyes were dancing with health and spirits, and the damask bloom upon her cheeks bespoke the glowing vitality which seemed to radiate from her.

“Athol,” exclaimed Mary, going to meet her, “this is an unexpected pleasure.”

¹ It may be expedient to remind our readers that this story is not designed for the discussion of ecclesiastical or theological questions. If they obtrude at all, it is because they are characteristic of the stirring times in which its scenes are laid, and natural to the personages introduced; but the writer has no sectarian motive, and follows strictly the impartial record of history. Many forgot in those days, as many forget now, that the true Church, “the Bride of Christ,” is undividable as well as invisible. Contentment and “schism” affect visible organizations only.—Ed. S. II.

"I have come to give you a real good scolding," cried the new-comer as she bent to kiss Mary, and then moved gracefully across the room towards the old lady, whom she saluted in like fashion. "I do not know when I saw you last. You are growing quite a stranger to Hownston. There was a time when I flattered myself that you did feel just a shade of liking for poor frivolous me: but now I find that if I am to keep myself in remembrance at all, it must be by my own unassisted efforts. Fie, Mrs. Mary, it is not like you to be so fickle! Who is to keep me in any kind of order if you turn your back upon me?"

Mary smiled, though there was a tinge of colour in her face which bespoke an emotion not entirely agreeable. She was too self-possessed to be embarrassed, but there was perhaps the least little bit of constraint in her manner as she said:

"The winter has been so long and cold that I seldom went into Hownston, and since the spring came upon us with a burst I have been very busy. You know I farm my own estate. I am a working woman, Athol, and not a lady at large like you."

Athol laughed merrily.

"Yes, and you work a great deal too hard. People do not have model estates for nothing, and everybody knows that Ernscliff is a perfect Utopia. Mrs. Ernscliff, I think that Mary is looking pale and fagged. I know how it always is with her when she will not give herself even a day's thorough change and recreation. I have come to insist upon her fulfilling a long-standing promise of spending a week with me. Now, Mary, you cannot deny that it is a promise. You made it quite six months ago. I am very long-suffering, but I will not be put off for ever. Mrs. Ernscliff, I appeal to you. Do you not think it would do her good?"

"I think it would, my dear," answered the old lady with a glance from one girl to the other. By Athol's blooming face, the countenance of gentle Mary did look something too pale and thoughtful. "It is good for the young to have change from time to time, and a week can be spared even by our busy Mary."

"There—you hear that? Thank you, Mrs. Ernscliff, I accept that as final. Mary, you shall come next week, I have it all planned;" and then Athol linked her arm within that of Mary and drew her through a little side door which opened upon the terrace walk, looking laughingly into her grave face.

"My dearest prude, you need have no fears. Do you think I do not see straight through you and your grave looks? But make your mind easy, George will not be at home. He has just had orders to join his regiment in York. Although I perfectly long for you to make the poor fellow happy, and to have you for a sister, I have the sense to know that whilst you remain unwilling it is worse than useless for him to pester you with attentions. Man-like and clumsy as the dear boy is, he would never see this for himself: so I just waited till he was quietly out of the way. For I do not mean to lose your friendship, because you cannot see your way to be anything more than a friend. And now that

you know all this, say that you will come with a good grace and be our guest for a week."

Mary's face had cleared considerably, and she now pressed Athol's hand affectionately.

"I shall be very glad to come. I should be as sorry as you for any cloud to come between us. It is very good of you not to be vexed because I cannot think of your brother as you wish."

"Well it would be ridiculous to make what George calls a *casus belli* out of that. For my own part, I think he is a very fine fellow, and wish very much that you did the same: but I always do say that a man like George can scarcely expect to pick up for his wife the ideal woman that you are."

"Athol, Athol, be not so foolish."

"I am not foolish; it is the one sign of sound sense that I possess, having made a friend of you. Whenever I am extra wild, and that has occurred frequently of late, Aunt Bridget always laments that I see so little of you. She will be delighted to hear that I have really secured my prize, and so will father. And, oh Mary, you will come at a good time for stirring scenes. You will see amongst other sights something of the baiting of these new preachers, which our youth seems to like quite as well as the baiting of bulls or of bears."

Mary's face was a little grave.

"Take care, Athol, I like not a jest carried too far."

"Oh, I beg your pardon humbly, but I thought you were of the most orthodox of all orthodox, and that one could speak plainly to you. Sax is always held up as a model place; it was one of your village champions who was the hero of the day last Sunday. I had a dim idea he was something of a protégé of yours."

"It is his little sister I try to befriend," answered Mary quietly: "I was sorry that Tom had been the instigator of riot."

"Well, he was scarcely that—it was George who planned it all. He and Fulk were resolved to put a stop to it, and Tom Heron and some others were in their employ. As it turned out, there was no great amount of fighting, and Tom did the work very neatly. Unluckily, after the boys had gone, the crowd gathered again, and in the end the preacher finished his discourse unmolested; but they have a warmer welcome than that ready for him another time. Hownston is not going to let itself be reformed by the Methodist ranters."

Athol spoke with the gaily contemptuous manner of a really profound indifference. As the Rector's daughter, she felt it incumbent upon her to side with those who assailed and condemned innovation, but as a matter of fact the whole thing was a matter of no moment at all to her. She was scarcely interested in it, only a little amused at the thought of a disturbance and the exercise of authority wielded by her brother.

"George will be away—but there are others to take it up for him. I think Fulk will for one—he was very much disgusted by what he heard—it seems to be horribly profane. Possibly George might ride over himself. Sunday is the day for that sort of sport."

Mary made no reply, and Athol rattled on upon all manner of subjects, not in the least aware how her words struck her companion. Careless, high-spirited, instinct with an overflowing vitality, the spoiled child of her father and a universal favourite wherever she went, it was perhaps little wonder that Athol Fortescue was something between what in modern parlance would be designated a hoyden and a butterfly. It might almost be asked what attraction there could be between herself and Mary Ernscliff. Perhaps it was the affinity of contrast that drew them together, or possibly there were depths in Athol's nature which she herself had never sounded, but which Mary had instinctively discovered. Athol was wont to declare that association with Mary made her "feel good," and, despite continual difference of opinion, the girls were real friends.

"You will not fail us—you will really come?" urged Athol, as she mounted her horse at the close of her visit, and leaned forward to speak her final adieu to Mary; and she looking up with a smile replied:

"Yes, I will come next week. We shall have a great deal to talk about. I shall have something to find fault with, Athol—so be prepared to be lectured."

"I will—I need it—I feel that I do. You have kept away too long Mary. But when we have you we will keep you—and if you are anxious to look at the wild animals nearer, we have the lion-tamer Nelson, working in a stone-mason's yard quite close to the Rectory. I mean one day to go and talk to him."

"I will go with you," said Mary gravely, and Athol with a merry laugh cantered off along the shady road.

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THOUGHT IN BELGIUM.

I.

THE Belgium of to-day is one of the smallest countries of Europe, its area being only a little over one-third that of Ireland. Yet in point of population it surpasses, relatively speaking, all other continental lands. It has now nearly 6,000,000 inhabitants, or 514 to the square mile, as compared with 224 in Germany and 42 in Russia in Europe. Belgium is also one of the youngest of European commonwealths, dating no farther back than 1831, when its present constitution was established, and its first king ascended the throne. But though reckoning only sixty years of independent existence, yet it has secured for itself a position which compares favourably with that of some other countries. It forms a perfect contrast to Spain, with which it was so closely connected for centuries, and at whose hands it suffered so grievously. Since it has been a self-governed country, it has had internal conflicts, but nothing has occurred to check or diminish to any appreciable extent its commercial prosperity. Even in 1848, when almost every throne in Europe was toppling, that of Belgium stood secure.

In many respects it is a model kingdom. From the outset it adopted the principle of religious liberty, and has faithfully adhered to it ever since, in spite of the fact that Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, and that the Ultramontane party have again and again been in the ascendant in the Parliament. Belgium may thus be said to have justified the Revolution of 1830, which gave it birth. By the Congress of Vienna (1817), Belgium and Holland were constituted a kingdom under the rule of Prince Frederick William of Nassau, but the union was a difficult one to maintain, owing to diversities of religion

and language. And the difficulty was increased by the unwise action of the Dutch in trying to force their language on all the people, and in securing for themselves nearly all the posts of honour and influence throughout the two countries. Discontent was thus created, and went on increasing till 1830, when, stimulated by the example of the French, who had just overthrown Charles x., the Belgians raised the standard of revolt, and secured their independence.

At the same time it must ever be matter of regret that the kingdom of the Netherlands, "the best piece of work done by the Congress of Vienna," as M. E. de Laveleye says, was broken up. Had the two countries remained united, with their population of nine or ten millions, they might have held their own in presence of the other powers of Europe. Separated, there is no security for either. But the Church of Rome was afraid of Protestant Holland, and therefore did its utmost to foment discontent among the Belgians, and to bring about the separation. Strange, therefore, as it may seem, modern Belgium, with its full liberty of thought and religion, owes its existence very largely to the Romish Church. Are we then to conclude that the heads of that Church in Belgium are in favour of such privileges? By no means. But, with a view to ulterior ends, it was necessary for them to accept the position, and to satisfy the cravings of the liberals for freedom. Besides, by the constitution of 1831, the Romish Church secured for itself a position such as it did not enjoy in any other part of the continent. It obtained the support of the State, without being subject to its control. But all its subsequent proceedings show that it is striving to attain



[From a sketch made on the occasion.]

SCENE IN THE PLACE DE MEER, ANTWERP, DURING THE FÊTE OF THE ASSUMPTION.
(AUG. 15, 1891)—BLESSING FROM THE ALTAR.

complete mastery, especially in the work of education. Should it be able to secure the monopoly in this department, it hopes to be able so to fashion the minds of coming generations that all idea of liberty in regard to thought and religion will be destroyed. Such is its dream.

Will it succeed? The answer remains with the future. Meanwhile, its position seems every year to become more assured. When the liberals were in power in 1879, they succeeded in carrying a measure for the secularisation of the primary schools. This excited the wrath of the clericals, and accordingly, in 1884, when they were once more in power, they obtained the withdrawal of support from these schools, and each parish was called on to decide whether it would keep up its own schools, or leave the children to attend those which in such large numbers had been set up in opposition to the government "atheistical" ones. The result was the closing of very many of the parish schools, and the education of the people passed very largely¹ into the hands of the priesthood. Again, by means of monasteries and convents, Rome is seeking to extend its influence. It has at present 1200 such establishments, with 4000 monks and 21,000 nuns, and at the present rate of progress every parish throughout the country will soon have its religious house. This will mean that Ultramontaniam, which now holds all these fraternities and sisterhoods under its direct control, will be able to exercise a direct influence in every centre of population over the political, commercial, and social life of the nation.

Again, if Rome succeeds in securing for itself the complete mastery of the land, what is likely to be the effect on the morals and general life of the people? Some approximate answer to such a question may be found by examining the influence which it has had since 1831. As regards education, the priests do not seem particularly anxious to promote it, for at the present day, when there are schools for all, and free instruction for all who cannot afford to pay for it, there is still a very large proportion of the people who can neither read nor write. In 1886, out of a population of 4,829,833, as many as 2,279,891 were ignorant of both reading and writing. In regard to morality, little, if any, improvement is apparent. Drunkenness is increasing, and is likely to do so when in many places every second or third house is a drink-shop. Cock-fighting is a common Sunday amusement in the mining districts, and is indulged in without any attempt at concealment. Something has been done by the convention signed with Holland in 1886 to suppress the horrible white slave trade, but immorality is fearfully prevalent, and indecent literature from France has free circulation. Materialism and scepticism are rampant. On the other hand, superstitions of the most absurd kind are believed by many. Nothing seems too ridiculous to be believed, and the bishops, if they do not approve of all the notions propagated by

some of their agents, yet do nothing to prevent their spreading. "Throughout the whole of the Romish Church in Belgium,¹ there is not even a symptom of a movement similar to that of the Old Catholics, or anything like Catholicism in a liberal form."

Rome is content if it can exercise over the people that sort of fascination of which it possesses the secret, and if it can control the education of the young. The people may be indifferent even to the form of religion, and may be sunk in materialism; the educated classes may be largely imbued with scepticism—all this apparently matters little, provided that the Church can secure more and more political power, and eventually be able to effect such a change in the fundamental principles of the constitution as will bring them into harmony with the doctrines enunciated in the syllabus.

Are we at all within sight of the day when Rome will be able to rob the Belgian people of the full religious liberty which the founders of the present *régime* made one of the corner-stones of the edifice? As already indicated, there is progress in that direction; but we would fain hope that the liberals, seeing the advance which their opponents are making, will understand that if their country is to be saved from obscurantism and spiritual despotism, they must gird up their loins for the conflict, and must arm themselves with those religious principles which alone can make them strong to conquer. Cromwell's Ironsides were irresistible because they were guided by conscience, and by faith in God and His Word. Belgian liberals must boldly sever their connection with Rome, and take their stand on the side of truth and righteousness, if they wish to see their country delivered from the machinations of the Roman Curia. But our readers will be asking, Has not Protestantism obtained a footing in Belgium, and may not deliverance be expected in that quarter? To this question we purpose now to direct our attention.

It may be well, however, before studying the work of the last sixty years in the dissemination of Divine truth, to glance at the history of similar attempts in former times. To the Netherlands in general, to the city of Antwerp in particular, belongs the honour of having given the first martyrs to the Reformation. On the 1st of July, 1523, Esch and Voes, two young Augustinian monks, were burnt at the stake in Antwerp. They died singing the *Te Deum*, and the tidings of their constancy led many to turn to the Gospel. Erasmus said "That death made many Lutherans."² The Netherlands was in those days well prepared to welcome the truth. In "its three hundred and fifty large cities,"³ life was at high pressure. Commerce and industry prospered, and brought the people into contact with all parts of Europe.

Long before the beginning of the sixteenth

¹ From an address by Pastor K. Anet, at Copenhagen, in 1884.

² D' Aubigné's "History of the Reformation" (first series), p. 363, note 2, first column.

³ D' Aubigné's "History of the Reformation" (second series), vol. vii. p. 613.

¹ In 1874, that is, long before the changes were made, M. de Laveleye said that the clerical schools had three times as many pupils as those of the State.

century, the doctrines of Wycliffe and Huss had spread among the people. At a still earlier period Waldensians had sought an asylum there, and had opened the eyes of many to understand the worth of the Bible. Many translations of the sacred volume had made their appearance in the Low Countries. Our own Tyndall there prepared and printed his English version. Dutch translations were also published. So, when Luther's writings made their way into the land, they

—hatters, curriers, tanners and the like." At Tournay, near the Bridge of Ernonville, 6000 people met at eleven o'clock at night to hear Ambrose Wille, and not many days after, 20,000 assembled at the same place to be instructed by this disciple of Calvin. Most of them came armed with axes and arquebuses in case of an attack. Not infrequently a fortified camp was formed. The superior forces of the government soon checked this effervescence. But that which effectually



[From a Sketch made on the occasion.]

FÊTE OF THE ASSUMPTION, ANTWERP.—THE PROCESSION. (AUG. 15, 1891.)

found an echo in many hearts. Everywhere the spirit of enquiry was abroad, and preachers began to proclaim to the people the Word of Life. Persecution tracked them from place to place. Edicts of the severest kind were issued. The tribunal of the Inquisition was set up; but still the movement proceeded. At length, in the early summer of 1566, as if by some mighty impulse from God, thousands in every direction gathered around the preachers, sometimes ex-priests, but in other cases "men of little education," as Motley¹ says, "utterly devoid of Hebrew, of lowly station

stayed it was an outbreak of iconoclastic fanaticism. In all the principal towns bands of armed men appeared, who broke into the churches and cathedrals, committing terrible havoc among the statues and pictures, driving the priesthood to despair, and compelling the magistrates and authorities to adopt the most strenuous measures to stay this contagious vandalism. It is still a moot question as to who were the authors of this movement, which more than anything else brought Protestantism into disrepute. The Protestants utterly disavowed it,¹ and there seem to

¹ "Rise of the Dutch Republic," p. 264.

¹ Wylie's "History of the Reformation," vol. viii. p. 57.

be reasons for supposing that the plot was arranged by the Roman Catholic party. One thing is certain, the iconoclasts came from France. Whatever the true explanation, the Reform movement was grievously injured by these acts of violence, for which the Romish authorities of course held the Protestants responsible.

For a brief season a small measure of liberty was allowed. A promise was even extorted from the Regent that the Inquisition should be put down. But when Philip II. in Madrid heard of the sacrilegious proceedings in the Low Countries he resolved on vengeance. He decreed a sentence of death on all the inhabitants: on some, because they were guilty of participation in these deeds; and on others, because they had failed to stop them. The Duke of Alva was sent to carry out the decree, and, by the help of the Council of Blood which he set up, and by letting his fanatical Spanish soldiers loose upon the people, he effectually stayed the Reformation, though he did not extirpate all the people. How William Prince of Orange rose up, and by almost incredible efforts established the Dutch Republic in the Northern part of the Netherlands, this is not the place to describe. Suffice it to say that, while in Holland Protestantism found a home, and has for many years been the religion of the majority of the people, in the Southern part of the Netherlands, or what we may call Belgium, Romanism ruled supreme. The preachers were silenced, and their flocks had either fled to other lands or had fallen by the sword. When, therefore, Belgium became an independent country in 1831, scarcely a vestige of the grand work of the sixteenth century remained. At most, three or four churches existed. They were to be found at Maria-Hoorbeke, or the *gueux's* corner, as it is still called; at Tournai-Rongy, where a church had been founded by a disciple of Calvin; at Dour and at Verviers-Hodimont, Dalhem. With the exception of these small communities, nothing remained of the flourishing churches that were springing up in every direction and were sheltering themselves under the mystic names of the *Vine*, the *Beehive*, the *Olive* and others, when the ruthless Alva began his work of destruction.

In 1831, therefore, Belgium was about as new a field for Protestant effort, as Spain was in 1869. Happily it was better prepared to receive the truth; and the progress of the evangelistic work which we have now to describe has been more satisfactory.

We have mentioned the four small remnants of churches that survived the devastating storms of persecution. One or two events in the chequered history of one of them—Dour—are not without interest. The few Protestants in the village, finding that the Toleration Edict (1781) of Joseph II. Emperor of Austria¹ allowed them

to meet for worship, determined to try to secure some religious privileges, and, in 1789, they asked a pastor who was established over several small churches in the North of France to visit them. At the same time one of their number built a small chapel at his own expense. In 1817 they secured a pastor for themselves, and in 1827, the work having grown very considerably, it became necessary to erect a larger place of worship. In the laying of the foundation stone, the pastor was assisted by Pastor Merle d'Aubigné, then minister in Brussels.

In the early part of the century, an incident occurred which showed that among some of these Protestants there was much sincere piety, which, as is always the case, had its influence on those who came into contact with it. Three miners were terribly burnt by an explosion of fire-damp. A priest came and offered his ministrations, but they replied that they possessed something which was far better than anything he could offer them. Shortly after, they knelt down, and, in spite of their sufferings, sung four verses of the sixth Psalm (metrical version) and then death stilled their voices. This scene made a deep impression, and even the priest was heard to exclaim, "One may certainly say of these men that they died like Christians." For many years the sixth Psalm was known in the Borinage district (where Dour is) as the Psalm of the burnt ones (*Psauve des Brûlés*).

No sooner was a pastor established at Dour than he began to visit the surrounding villages. At Pâturages he was welcomed by several miners who had been led by one of their companions to study the Word of God, and also by a poor blind woman named Celestine, in whose hut meetings were regularly held for some fourteen years, when it became necessary to remove to a larger place. At length, in 1836, a spacious temple was erected, which, at present, is too small for the congregation that seeks to gather within its walls.

In 1690 an incident occurred at Pâturages (it has often been told) which shows the persistent way in which the Church of Rome sought to lay hold of and to destroy every copy of the Word of God. It was known that a Bible was in circulation. It belonged to some miners. Search was again and again made in their homes, but in vain. One day it had been hidden at the bottom of a cradle that was left in charge of a little girl of eight or nine years. She was told that if any one came to the house she was to go on rocking the baby. Presently the priest's emissaries appeared, and after searching everywhere, at last examined the cradle. What was the despair of the parents on returning home to find that their precious treasure had disappeared! They would rather have found their house burnt down. All attempts to recover the volume were in vain, and so several families clubbed together and sent to Holland to procure another, which cost them forty francs.

¹ Belgium was then subject to Austrian rule.

"BENT, NOT BROKEN."

HOW is it that while one Christian rejoices in assurance, another rarely enters into its joys, and a third perhaps, never gets beyond "hoping?"

Active and energetic people who spend themselves for others, are usually to be found amongst those who can say fearlessly, "I know whom I have believed—He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." But there are quiet and contemplative Christians who sometimes lose themselves in self-dissection and introspection, and spend their time in looking within, when they should be at work and trusting to Christ alone for peace.

We hear, however, from Christian workers, the lament that religious experience nowadays is shallow, and sorrow for sin is superficial and soon forgotten.

An old minister, lately gone from active service to the "rest that remaineth," used to say to his younger brethren: "You will probably be a good many years in the ministry, before you have to counsel a really heart-broken penitent."

Perhaps we do not make sufficient allowance for natural temperament, and also for the very repressive training of the present day, when self-control is cultivated at the expense of feeling, and even home affection is too often deemed a weakness to be smiled at.

In Puritan times there were "great searchings of heart" among the devout, and it was deemed a sign of grace to walk in darkness. "The joy of the Lord" was looked on rather as a staff for the valley of the shadow of death than as "strength" for daily duty.

In the writings of Thomas Brooks (1650), mention is made several times of one Mistress Mary Honeywood, whose religious experience he dwells upon in his discourse, "An Ark for all God's Noahs." He describes her as "an ancient and religious gentlewoman who lived many years in much horror and terror of conscience," believing herself shut out from the covenant of grace. Her home was at Mark's Hall, Coggeshall, the seat of the Honeywoods for more than three hundred years. She was married when only sixteen years of age; and her eldest son, born, as the old chronicle says, "on Michaelmas Eve's eve, Sep. 27, 1545," was brought to Mark's Hall as an infant. It was her grandson, Sir Thomas Honeywood, who was Colonel in Oliver Cromwell's army, and who, with Fairfax, laid siege to Colchester. Brought up under his grandmother's influence, it is not surprising to find that he hated intolerance and oppression of every kind. She was a personal friend of holy John Bradford, and his faithful correspondent during his imprisonment. Her regard for him was so strong as to overcome the natural shrinking from the sight of suffering which must have existed in a woman of so noble a nature, for we find that she was a spectator of his martyrdom, being

present when he was burnt at Smithfield in 1555. The crowd was so great that her shoes were trodden off her feet, and she had to go barefoot to St. Martin's before she could procure a new pair. It seems to have been some time after this period that the "horror and terror" came upon her.

Many godly ministers, we are told, repaired to her for her comforting, amongst them John Foxe, Martyrologist, "than whom no more happy an instrument to set the joints of a broken spirit." It was a delicate task, and like many a would-be comforter, from the days of Eliphaz onward, he found that his words only added bitterness to her sorrow.

Even at the dinner-table, the all-absorbing topic of conversation was her soul trouble. One day in the depth of her anguish, she rose from the table and taking a Venice wine-glass in her hand, she dashed it with violence on the ground, crying out, "I am as surely damned at this glass is broken." "Here happened a wonder," says Thomas Fuller: "The glass rebounded again, it was not broken," and as it rolled to her feet unharmed, it was as a message of peace to her troubled heart. Not long after, "God suddenly shot comfort like lightning into her soul, so that she had the remainder of her life in spiritual gladness."

She lived to be ninety-three years old, and to see as many descendants as there are days in the year. Dr. Honeywood, one of her grandsons, tells us that he was present at a dinner party which she gave when two hundred of them were present. The Venice glass was long preserved as a family relic, and at last length accidentally broken; but the fragments are still treasured at Mark's Hall.

Within a couple of miles of that spot, there lived a few years ago, an old lady who passed through an experience similar to Mrs. Mary Honeywood's. She was a daughter of Mr. Houston, one of the first deacons of the old Poultry Chapel, which still survives in its much more stately offspring, the City Temple. She married her cousin, Fisher Unwin Pattisson, and came to reside in Coggeshall, where she spent the rest of her life.

Mrs. Pattisson was a woman of great refinement, with the courtly manners of the early part of this century. Her snowy hair and fresh complexion, even when eighty years of age, enhanced the attractiveness of a face always beautiful. Her keen sense of humour, ready repartee, and quick response to the joy or pain of those around her, made her a charming companion in her brighter hours. She was loved and admired by the poor, who called her Lady Pattisson, though she had not a title.

There were times when for weeks together her face was joyless, the sparkle faded from her eye, and she spoke only in a whisper, by reason

of fits of religious depression and despondency. She became restless and sleepless. The day was filled with sighs, and the night was intolerable with its silence and inactivity. With the first gleam of daylight she would rise and steal out into the garden, where, pacing up and down, she would wring her hands in agony, murmuring: "I am lost, lost, lost for ever!"

That sunny garden, with its grand yew hedge, more than one hundred years old, and its clustering woodbine and trim box edging, was her joy and pride; and when she recovered from her melancholy, one of the first signs of restoration was seen in the flowers with which she made every room fragrant.

While the cloud rested on her spirit, even the house of prayer lost its attraction, and the Bible became to her an armoury whence she drew arrows of torture for her own destruction.

One stormy day in June, when she had been for six weary weeks in sadness, and had become wasted and physically weak, she rose early and went out to the garden.

Pacing the gravel walk, she raised her eyes for a moment to a cluster rose overhanging the path. She saw that a branch which had been rudely tossed by the stormy wind of the night was bending low with its flowers bruised and faded. "Ah," she said "that is just like me, broken off from the stem, driven by the rough winds from the true Vine; ready to perish; cast off; lost."

So saying she took hold of it to lift it, feeling something akin to sympathy for its forlorn condition; when, lo! as she touched it, she found it was not broken, only bent and bruised.

Tenderly replacing it amongst the stronger boughs, she paused, and the thought flashed as a ray of heaven's own sunshine into her heart: "I, too, am bruised and bent, but not torn off; still in Christ, though drooping and joyless."

The cloud passed from her spirit,

Like some sweet summer morning
After a night of pain.

She took it as a message from God to cheer His sorrowful child, and in gladness she could look up and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

We have no warrant to look for such special aids to faith as these holy women found in the "tokens for good" that have been related. Thomas Scott, the Commentator, says: "The Holy Spirit by producing in believers the tempers and affections of children, attests their adoption into God's family. This is not done by any voice, immediate revelation, or impulse, or by any text brought to the mind; for all these are equivocal and delusory; but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences."

In the same strain are the wise words of John Wesley: "Let none ever presume to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit, which is separate from the fruit of it."

Physical conditions are sometimes the explanation of such cases of religious despondency as we have described; sometimes also they arise from peculiarities of personal experience, from overmuch isolation, or from imperfect views of life

and duty. This active age gives fewer opportunities of brooding despair. The tender sympathy and pitiful patience of the Lord Jesus Himself are required for a perfect healing.

"It is one thing for a man to have his salvation certain, another to be certain that he is certain," says Bishop Ussher. "The Spirit of God does sometimes so work upon the soul that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is sweet calm, the soul resting as in the arms of Jesus."

As Sir R. Grant beautifully sings:

Yes, even in age and grief, Thy name
Shall still my languid heart inflame,
And bow my faltering knee;
Oh! yet this spirit feels the fire;
This trembling hand and drooping lyre
Have still a strain for Thee;

Yes; broken, tuneless, still, O Lord,
This voice transported shall record
Thy goodness, tried so long;
Till, sinking slow, in calm decay,
In feeble notes it melts away
Into a scraph's song.

MRS. PHILIPS.

Hymn for Fishermen.

LORD of the tempest, when Thy lost ones, needing
All help and comfort, cry to Thee alone,
Hear Thou in heaven, and answer to their pleading,
Be nigh to save Thine own!

Did'st Thou not choose, throughout Thine earthly story,
Poor fisher-folk for Thy disciples here?
And still to Thee, enthroned above all glory,
The nets and boats are dear.

Thou, who hast slept upon the fisher's pillow,
And waked to chide the tempest's midnight roar,
Art mindful still of anguish on the billow
And heart-break on the shore.

Clasped in Thine hand life's utmost wave is sleeping,
And never boat can drift beyond Thy ken,
But in Thy heart of hearts, in closer keeping,
Thou hast the souls of men!

When the long hours of strain prove unavailing,
And daybreak shows no increase for their toil,
Speak to Thy brethren when their hearts are failing,
And guide them to the spoil;—

When the great voices of the storm are calling,
And death lies ambushed in each reeling wave,
When from the breakers, in their wrath appalling,
No mortal aid can save;—

Then, as of old, brave Thou the awful weather,
And makes its wrath an highway for Thy will,
Till stormy wind and fainting heart together,
Shall hear Thy "Peace be still."

And when, death past, and tempests all departed,
The boats come in, no more to cleave the foam,
Upon the shore, O Saviour, loving-hearted,
Speak Thou their welcome home!

MARY HOWLES JARVIS.

DOROTHY'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

CHAPTER I.



THERE is always a great deal of mystery in the air at Christmas-time. Everything indoors and out-of-doors is just the same, but quite different, somehow. The trees put on a special Christmas look; and if they are covered with snow, so much the better. The most scraggy bush is capable of becoming a miniature Christmas-tree. Indoors, the very pictures lend themselves to the general festivity; and will support an amount of green adornment that would be quite unbearable at any other time. The fires burn with a frost-given vigour; and if the keen air makes old hearts beat more feebly, and the dazzle outside brings tears to eyes that had once sparkled at such a sight, why, it is all in the natural order of things. For it is the children's festival; and who would enter into this Christmas world must be led by a little child.

It was a real Christmas world upon which Dorothy Bingley looked out that morning. Every blade of grass was frosted and sparkling, as if the earth were one vast Christmas cake, into which you had only to cut to extract a slice of joy and festivity. Overhead, the leafless trees, each one adorned in like fashion, stretched out arms of blessing; while the sun, putting a brave face on his lack of power, lighted up the crystals on bare boughs and brown grasses till they sparkled again.

Dorothy had lived most of her seven-year-old life at her grandfather's house, with her widowed mother; and Christmas made no change in the quiet routine of Mr. Thornhill's household. Perhaps Aunt Margaret, as she called her—though she was her mother's cousin—looked paler than ever then; but Dorothy was not old enough to notice that her soft, fluffy hair got greyer each year, though she was still young. It may have been that her dark eyes made her look paler than she really was; just as they used to do in the days when she was “rare, pale Margaret” to Squire Thornhill's only son.

But things had been very different years ago, when the Squire, as they called him in the little town of Westerton hard by, used to keep open house with the four young people; his son and daughter, and the orphan nephew and niece who had been brought up with them. He had lost his wife when the children were quite young; but even then, he had not shut himself up as he did after that quarrel with his son, just ten years ago this Christmas-time.

What the rights and wrongs of the story were, not the most experienced gossip had been able to ascertain; but young Hugh Thornhill had disappeared from the neighbourhood, no one knew whither. And he such a promising young fellow too, who had done so well at Oxford! All kinds of wild stories got about as to the cause of his disappearance; but the Squire—a silent, stern man at the best of times, was not one who would be likely to confide in his

neighbours anything that was not to the credit of his name. So the neighbours talked, and regretted. And Mr. Thornhill avoided them openly, resenting the sympathy which he knew they were ready to offer him. And then his daughter married her cousin, Margaret's brother, went out to India, and the two were left alone.

The neighbours, who used to pity Margaret, living that solitary life with the stern-looking man, hoped for better things when his daughter lost her husband and came home with her baby girl to live with them. But they were disappointed. Mrs. Bingley was not helpless in the matter of babies, so did not stand in need of the advice which was so persistently offered to her, and after a short time things went on in the same quiet way at the Red House. It requires some courage, and a great deal of self-confidence, to go to a house where you feel you are not welcome, even when you want to be kind. So Dorothy grew and thrived in the old nursery, with Mrs. Siggs, the old “Nannie” who had brought them all up, as her devoted slave, and Jill, the fox-terrier who had known younger days, as her inseparable companion.

No one guessed how much puzzling went on behind the big spectacles which she wore, and which gave an air of such owl-like wisdom to the plump, rosy face; nor how much the child was conscious of the grave, subdued atmosphere that pervaded the household. She did not notice that her mother was careful to keep her away from her grandfather as much as possible; old people are seldom equal to the super-abundant life of young ones. And Mr. Thornhill, with his white hair and the grave, stern face that never smiled, was hardly one to attract a child. Dorothy soon learned where she might go without blame in the old house; and it was one of her earliest and greatest treats to be allowed to follow “Nannie” into that room which was always ready for the guest who never came, and to help her dust it, while Aunt Margaret put fresh flowers on the table. It was Uncle Hugh's room—the uncle whose name she was never to say to anybody, least of all to her grandfather. His were the toys in the old nursery which she loved best; and Jill, dear old sleepy Jill, had been his dog. The picture over the dining-room mantelpiece, at which grandfather always glanced before he opened the big Bible at prayers, was that of this uncle, whose name Dorothy never heard but from “Nannie”—and then spoken in a low voice, and it was such a nice face, too.

Such was the quiet life in the Red House, till Dorothy was about seven years old, and then another shadow fell across the subdued household. Mr. Thornhill became blind, a hopeless blindness, the oculists said, and he sat alone in the darkness, thinking always the same sad thoughts, as the frown on his forehead, and his tightly shut lips, showed plainly enough. And then a great feeling of sorrow for him began to take possession of Dorothy's heart; and she would sit, watching him, till the awe in which she had always held him gave place to a longing to help him as she saw him feeling about in the darkness for something that he could not reach. It came, after a time, to be a regular thing for Dorothy to spend long hours with him. And on the strength of wearing spectacles herself, and having something amiss with her own blue eyes, she came to believe that no one could feel for him, and understand his

wants as she did. Could she not guide him, out of doors, better than any one else, because she was nearer the ground, and therefore could see what was in his way better than taller people? So, in a quiet, but very determined way, she had taken him under her special care. And it came to pass that the touch of her soft, plump hands could bring a smile to his face, while he was always ready for her chatter about what was going on around them. A new look was beginning to come over his face, as he learned to look at the world through the eyes of a little child.

Children do not feel the want of that which they have never known, and an only child need by no means be a lonely one. It never occurred to Dorothy that Christmas could be different to what it was in her own house, a day on which grandfather was more silent than usual; Aunt Margaret in her own room, and her mother—well—as Mrs. Siggs said to Jane, the young nurse who had lately taken her place with Dorothy, "They'd no call, any of them, to be merry at Christmas-time." To the child herself, the day brought a mixture of birthday and Sunday feelings; and what with the presents, the decorations, and the heartiness of the singing in the old church, it was what Dorothy fancied Sundays in heaven must be like. Only, that there one might not be liable to cold feet and to being pricked with holly. It was not till Jane's advent that Dorothy had known what Christmas really meant in other houses. Jane had been nursery-maid in a large family, and the child was never tired of hearing about their doings. When it came near Christmas, Jane's stories of what the "young ladies and gentlemen" did were so enchanting that a great longing rose up in poor Dorothy's heart for something of the same kind: something that might make Christmas, which came once a year, as Jane had taught her, a time of real good cheer. And Jane, to whom she communicated these hopes, lent a willing ear. She was young enough herself to enjoy anything of the kind; and Christmas Day, with nothing beyond a good dinner, especially when that was to be had all the year round, seemed to her but a poor way of merry-making. But nothing could be done without Mrs. Siggs' permission. That good lady made very short work of it, when consulted on the subject.

"You mind your own business, Jane, and leave Miss Dorothy to them as knows what's best for her all the year round. She won't be none the happier pulling the place about her ears. Don't you say nothing more about it," Mrs. Siggs went on, in a shaking voice, "they can't bear nothing of the sort nowadays, and no wonder, neither."

"Well," persisted Jane, who was loath to give up a plan she and Dorothy had been busy over, "I can't see why that poor child's to have nothing merry-like, if they won't. It's a sin and shame to keep a child as quiet as a mouse on Christmas Day, and I don't care who hears me say it!"

"I wish to goodness you'd have kept your tales to yourself, and not put things into the child's head to make her unhappy, Jane," said Mrs. Siggs severely. "She never wanted for nothing before you came here." For it had been a sore trial to Mrs. Siggs to give up her charge; and nothing but age and infirmities would have compelled her to consent to the change.

Thus challenged, Jane retorted that some folks couldn't bear for other people to do what they couldn't themselves, etc., etc., At no time of life is it easy or pleasant to give up cherished plans, and as Dorothy stood at the window looking out upon the dazzling Christmas world that morning, she saw little of it through the tears that filled the blue eyes behind the big spectacles she wore. She saw beyond the trees, across the brown grass, where the sun had not yet dispersed the frosty mist, the little fir-tree that was to have brought some of the spirit of joy, that was so universal outside, into the quiet old house, as her Christmas-

tree. The tears spread themselves over Dorothy's spectacles and shut out the view; and as she took them off, and sat down beside Jill on the hearth-rug to wipe them dry, something very much like a sob must have reached the old dog's ears, for she licked her face with a confronting look. Perhaps she too had thoughts that puzzled her, for it took her more than one turn round on the hearth-rug before, with a sigh, she closed her eyes for sleep. But the mystery over which Dorothy was puzzling could not be so easily forgotten. She could not make out why they were all looking so sad—mother, Aunt Margaret, and Nannie, if grandfather was not really ill. Why might she not go to him, as she had always done till the last few days? Dorothy was quite certain she could be perfectly quiet. She was sure he wanted her; he always did. And she had planned such a happy Christmas for him, for all of them! The tears that would come, fell on Jill's nose and disturbed the placid slumber into which the old dog had fallen.

A SCRIPTURE ELLIPSIS EXERCISE.

NO. I.

We ought — — — God rather than man.
The patient in spirit — — — the proud in spirit.
Call Jesse to the — — — I will show thee what thou shalt do.
Whether it be right in the sight of God — — — unto you more than unto God, judge ye.
They loved the praise of men more — — — praise of God.
Ye eat the — — — and ye clothe you with the wool.
I am full of the burnt offerings — — — and the fat of fed beasts.

Find the missing words in these passages. When set in order they form a text from the First Book of Samuel.

L. T.

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURE ENIGMAS.

NO. I.—p. 16.—DEATH—SLEEP.

- | | | | | |
|------|--------|---|-----------|----------------|
| 1. D | arknes | S | | Rom. xiii. 12. |
| 2. E | vi | L | | 3 John 11. |
| 3. A | liv | E | | Rev. iii. 1. |
| 4. T | ru | E | | Gal. ii. 4. |
| 5. H | el | P | | Phil. iv. 3. |

NO. II.—p. 16.—MELCHIZEDEK.—Gen. xiv. 18; Heb. vi. 20.

- | | | | |
|---|----------|-----------|--------------------|
| M | -anoah | | Judges xiii. 22. |
| E | -lisha | | 2 Kings iii. 15. |
| L | -uke | | Luke i. 2. |
| C | -aleb | | Num. xiii. 30. |
| H | -ezekiah | | 2 Chron. xxix. 31. |
| I | -saac | | Gen. xxvii. 2. |
| Z | -acchæus | | Luke xix. 8. |
| E | -zra | | Ezra ix. 9. |
| D | -eborah | | Judges iv. 9. |
| E | -liphaz | | Job xxii. 1, 21. |
| K | -ish | | 1 Sam. ix. 3. |

ANSWER TO CITY OF SCRIPTURE

NO. I.—p. 16.—DAN.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Gen. xiv. 11-14. | 4. 1 Kings xii. 29, 30. |
| 2. Jos. xix. 47. | 5. 2 Kings x. 28, 29. |
| 3. 1 Kings xv. 20; xx. 34. | 6. Ezekiel xxvii. 2, 19. |
| | 7. Amos viii. 14. |