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Isabella Macpherson.

A Devoted Life.

By

Rev. John Macpherson.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO



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A DEVOTED LIFE.



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Gabella MacPherson

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BY

JOHN MACPHERSON.

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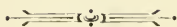
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P R E F A C E .



IN the course of her life Isabella Macpherson spoke about the tremendous business of the soul to upwards of twenty thousand persons, one by one. All this Christian work with much more of the same kind was simply a labour of love, and was carried on side by side with laborious domestic duty. Her zealous endeavours were illuminated by a certain nobleness of character and greatness of heart. Her life, as the reader will see, was a stream at which many weary travellers on the world's rough highway drank and were refreshed.

A course so beneficent is thought by her fellow-workers to be not unworthy of record. Accordingly,

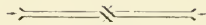
at their request, this Memoir has been prepared, and is now issued in the hope that He to whose grace the subject of it owed so much may be pleased to use it for His own glory.

This volume may serve to encourage a weary worker on the same field, or rouse some of Christ's "unemployed" to go and work in the vineyard. It may furnish a fresh illustration of the fact that the secret of power in Christian work is a close walk with God, and that self-sacrifice never fails of true success. It may be used by the Holy Spirit to guide some hapless wanderer into the way of life. God grant it may, and to Him be the glory!

JOHN MACPHERSON.

Dundee.

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ISABELLA MACPHERSON:

A DEVOTED LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Links.



ONE day, early in this century, an old man was standing at his cottage door in Smithtown of Culloden—better known at that time by its name in Gaelic, Balnagowan—a picturesque hamlet, situated not far from the famous battle-field where the career of the Stuarts came to a close.

The village patriarch, John Macpherson, was watching a band of sportsmen, who, with a pack of hounds, were in full pursuit of a hare. Suddenly doubling, the hapless victim of the sport sprang over the fence into Macpherson's garden; and thence, in sheer desperation, bounded through an open casement into a room, where, trembling and bleeding, it cowered in a corner. The old man shut the window, and awaited the arrival of the sportsmen.

"The hare is in the garden," said the lordly master of the hunt.

"No; she is in the house," replied Macpherson, pointing to the window.

"Out with her!" shouted half a dozen voices.

"Never!" was the old Highlander's reply, as he drew himself up proudly, "The hare has sought hospitality

under my roof ; and, in God's name, hospitality she shall have ! Your Maker and my Maker is her Maker also ; and never shall I turn one of God's helpless creatures in the hour of trouble to the door." Knowing the character of the man, the leader of the party ordered a retreat. When men and dogs had disappeared, the kind-hearted host took the timid guest in his hands, and gently carrying her to the neighbouring forest, set her free.

After him his son John, a man of fervent piety and gentle character, "held the fort" in the Balnagowan cottage, over the portal of which was written, as every man, woman, and child in Smithtown knew, "Jehovah-shammah," the Lord is there. His wife Jean, in person tall, portly, and dignified—an eminently wise and gracious woman—swayed the sceptre of a benign and heavenly influence over the Culloden hamlet. Gathering the villagers into her house, she was wont to read and expound to them the Word of Life.

The Bible in Gaelic was not as yet within reach of the people ; and few of them knew the English language : but Mrs. Jean Macpherson was equal to the situation. Knowing both languages, her method was to open her English Bible, and translating into Gaelic as she read, give to her fellow-villagers in their mother-tongue the glad tidings of great joy. She was the friend and counsellor of her neighbours in all their times of trouble. By her wise and kindly arbitration, many a quarrel was composed, many an angry voice was hushed. *The house was still open to the hunted hare.* Pursued by doubt and fear, hounded by the devil and remorse, the earnest inquirer made for the Balnagowan cottage, where the Temple lamp shone with a clear

ray; and when the godly wife was busy with a case of conscience, her husband would be on his knees in the adjoining closet.

Far removed from the world's noisy ambitions and maddening strife, finding in their Heaven-blest home a repose that flies the halls of the great, and knowing a secret more full of destiny than the mysteries of Royal Cabinets—John Macpherson and his wife Jean served their generation well, and handed down the best of heirlooms, the heritage of them that fear the Lord.

Donald, their fourth son, married Christina, daughter of Alexander Fraser, a farmer at Kirkhill, a parish in the country of the Frasers. This Alexander Fraser was famous among his people for his Samson-like strength; a gift which he seldom employed in its extraordinary range, except in self-defence or in some chivalrous service. His landlord and chief, Lord Lovat, had a favourite dog, of monstrous size and ferocity, the terror of the community. Men and women had been bitten and maimed; children had been worried and torn: but nobody dared complain for fear of offending the great man. One night Alexander Fraser, after an interview with Lovat on some matter of business, was returning home, when he was suddenly assailed by the savage brute. A fierce struggle followed, all the more terrible from the darkness of the night. The conflict must have been desperate; for the strong man, thrusting his hand into the dog's mouth, wrenched out his tongue from the root, and the animal fell dead at his feet. Lovat was in great wrath, and vowed vengeance. But who was the offender? Everybody guessed; but no one ventured to speak. The wrathful Baron himself must have had his

suspicious; but he said nothing: the people however rejoiced at their deliverance from a standing horror.

Alexander was as kind-hearted and genial as he was brave and strong. One of his virtues was to "think kindly of all men, and speak evil of none." He detested the evil tongue; and when censorious words were spoken in his hearing, he was wont to break in by saying, "Now tell us something good about that man; I never knew anybody of whom a kind word could not be spoken."

Christina Fraser was no less noted for her beauty than her father was for strength. Like him, she was the enemy of the evil tongue and of all mean and dastardly ways. In her long life she was never known to have lost a friend, or to have quarrelled with a neighbour.

Donald Macpherson and his wife spent seven years of their wedded life in Inverness, where four of their children were born. Here three little graves in the parish kirkyard tell the story of their first family sorrows:—

" Only a baby's grave—
A foot or two at the most
Of star-daisied sod:
Yet methinks that God
Knows what that little grave cost."

Chastened in spirit, the bereaved parents, with their little daughter Hannah, removed to the Lowlands of Banffshire, and settled at Cullen; a royal burgh, situated on the shore of the German Ocean, where the great North Sea breaks with arctic force ere it narrows into the calmer waters of the Moray Frith.

From the head of a beautiful bay, Cullen looks full in the face the great ocean stretching away northwards in unmeasured expanse—glorious in storm and in calm: with its

ever-changing moods and many voices; its moanings; its thunderings; and its peaceful murmurs along the shore. Across the Moray Frith to the North-west, some fifty miles away, the lofty mountains of Sutherland and Caithness rise as from the deep in outlines of majestic grandeur, adding a charm of their own to sea and sky. Along the shore are beetling cliffs; rugged headlands thrusting themselves defiantly far out into the deep; rocks of fantastic shapes; dark caverns resounding with the bellowing noise of the waves; sandy creeks and fairy-like coves, with beds of broken shells shining beneath the blue-green water with the whiteness of alabaster. Here are myriads of outs and ins among the crags and braes, nature's most secluded haunts—where the plaintive music of the tide chimes well with the wild bird's cry; where azure skies smile on land and sea; and every sight and sound both near and far unite their testimony to tell the Creator's glory, and entice weary men to come aside and rest awhile.

Hard by, the fair domains of Cullen House, with forest and glen; here a meandering stream, and there a bosky dell; the lofty Bin with its richly-wooded slopes, its heath-clad summit and towering form of perfect symmetry; the quaint old pre-Reformation church nestling among the trees, with the countless dead sleeping peacefully around; the field where Norseman and Celt grappled in deadly strife; the ancient cairn in the wood telling where a hero fell; the hoary Castle of Findlater on its rock by the sea; with many a fair scene wedded to many an old legend—serve to give the little Northern burgh an interest and a charm which have passed away for ever from the modern city with its clamour and dust, its artificial life and unnatural strain.

Here Donald Macpherson pursued his calling of road-making, having learned the art with Telford, the celebrated engineer, whose system he followed. In Banffshire and the neighbouring county of Aberdeen, many a road and bridge, and other work of public utility, remain to attest his skill and thoroughness. The love of perfecting his work brought less to his pocket than to his good name; but cost what it might, he would never lower the standard either of his conscience or his taste; and many a time as day after day he would be showing where a curve needed a more graceful rounding, or a slope a gentler sweep, or an incline an easier gradient, his men were wont to say, "His eye is a hard master to him." Himself a hard worker, he had little mercy on the eye-servant; while he was generous towards his faithful workmen, some of whom were in his service well-nigh thirty years. He was too ready, out of sheer compassion, to give employment to navvies on the tramp, although these Bohemians frequently caused him no little trouble by raising strife among his men. Referring to those quarrelsome and ungrateful mischief-makers, he used to say, "I know what Paul means when he speaks of fighting with beasts at Ephesus: the beasts were unreasonable and wicked men, more treacherous and cruel than lions or tigers." And yet the wandering navy who turned up hungry and forlorn always got "another chance." Whatever may have been his deficiencies, Macpherson was not wanting in the kindness of heart that characterized his fathers.

In Cullen were born a son and four daughters, the youngest of whom, ISABELLA, the subject of this memoir, first saw the light on May 7th, 1842.

CHAPTER II.

Divine Footprints.



ONE bright Sabbath evening, the people of Cullen were assembled in the open air to hear an itinerant preacher. A steep grassy brae served for a gallery where the audience sat in rows. Behind, at a little distance, the Castle Hill, a picturesque eminence, was looking calmly down; not on scenes of bloody feud as in olden times, but on a people worshipping the Lord of Hosts, beneath the canopy of the peaceful heavens. In front, a little way below, the waters of the North Sea, gleaming under the rays of the summer sun, were breaking in gentle waves upon the beach; in psalm-like tones murmuring the praises of the Most High, as if they said:—

“All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice.”

Even now I can recal the scene: the stalwart form of the preacher; his long arm stretched out; his gleaming eye; his stentorian voice ringing back in echoes from the steep side of the Castle Hill; the moaning of the sea, mingling with the psalm-singing; and the eager faces of the listening multitude, glowing in the slanting rays of the sun now descending in the western sky. There seemed a deeper, tenderer hush than usual, as the preacher began

his discourse. No sooner had he commenced, than a young man, standing in a prominent position, drew all eyes upon himself. With a cane in his hand he began to mimic every gesture and motion of the preacher. And this he continued to do with only too great success: the service became a farce; the minister was covered with ridicule. Long and patiently did the preacher bear with the youthful scoffer; bravely did he hold on his way in the hope of overcoming by meek endurance: but all in vain. The profane mockery went from bad to worse till further progress became impossible. At length, pausing, the preacher raised his hand, and, pointing to the impious offender, said, in tones of awful solemnity: "Young man, if you die in the ordinary course of nature, God has not sent me to preach the Gospel!" The terrible words sent a thrill through the audience; the fear of God seemed to fall on the congregation; and probably the only person not moved was the hardened mocker himself.

Next Lord's Day that young man was amusing himself by climbing a dangerously steep cliff at the sea-side. Getting astride the ledge of the crag, he began, after his manner, to shout certain profane words to his companions below, when the rock on which he sat gave way, and he was precipitated to the bottom and killed. It was a loud sermon to the youth of Cullen when the fragments of the young man's body were borne home that Sabbath afternoon. For this incident, in all its details, there may not be a pigeon-hole in modern philosophy; but in those days men had scarcely begun to dream of an infinite gap between nature's laws and nature's God. Many believed they heard in it the voice of Him who governs the world. The tender

conscience of the young received a Godward impulse; to some of them, indeed, the incident was an epoch, and became a memory to mould and inspire a better future. The preacher was John Murker, of Banff. Twenty years after this event, when I asked that venerable man of God how he had been led to utter the strange speech in question, he said he did not know; it was one of the things he had never been able to fathom. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men."

The preaching of Murker and the memorable incident on that Sabbath evening were only ripples on the surface of a tide then rapidly setting in, the waters of which laved the feet of Isabella while she was yet a child. The revival of 1839 was the first resounding breaker of that tide which reached a high-water mark in 1859. Those twenty years marked a new era in the preaching of the Gospel throughout Scotland. The long winter of spiritual death was now passing away; the sweet breath of a genial spring was working its beneficent miracles: dead churches were quickened; slumbering communities were awakened; everywhere glad voices were heard singing the "new song."

The family to which the subject of this memoir belonged came under the sweep of this gracious awakening. The parents were conscious of a distinct spiritual visitation, and their personal experience made itself apparent in their family life. A warmer light shone in the house; a ruddier glow fell from above, colouring and brightening every element of home. Salvation came to be regarded as a clear-cut, outstanding matter of immediate concern. It seemed as though the Saviour, heretofore only about the

door, had entered the house, and was come to stay. The children well knew why their father at regular seasons went into a certain room and shut the door. They can yet recal the feeling of awe that stole over them when they thought of the solemn conference proceeding in the solitude and silence of that closet. Sometimes near the door stood a little watcher, waving her hand, and, in a child's whisper, saying, "Don't go there! God is in just now speaking to father."

This revival in the house took place not long after 1843, the memorable year of the disruption in the Scottish Kirk and the formation of the Free Church, to which our parents attached themselves. The first more striking result in the family was the conversion of Hannah, the oldest of the children, then in the bloom of girlhood. From her beauty and sweetness of disposition, naturally attractive, she became through grace the brightest sunbeam in the house. Her joyousness, her constant singing of psalms and spiritual songs, her kind-heartedness, the naturalness and sweetness of her piety—placed religion in a new light before the rest of the children. It was very well, they used to think, for older people to be religious and holy; but now here is religion in the merry days of youth; here is one of themselves converted; and strange enough there is no gloom—it is all sunshine. Hannah became the evangelist of the house, and laboured for the salvation of the rest. In particular, she was wont to spend whole nights in prayer for the conversion of her only brother then a youthful student at the University in Aberdeen; and, in a marked degree, her youngest sister Isabella, though but a child, came under the spell of her love and piety.

Two incidents that occurred in Isabella's childhood served more than anything else to deepen her religious impressions. These were—first the death of a maternal uncle, and next the death of her eldest sister. “Uncle Archie” had seen much of the world—had fought in Spain; had endured many hardships; and, after a life of adventure and vicissitude, had returned to his own country, a brave, gentle, upright man—a soldier, if not of fortune, at least of honour. He was on a visit to his friends in Cullen. A reader, an observer, a thinker, he was a man of few words; and only when his young relatives provoked him to lay aside his usual reserve, would he describe the lands he had visited, the scenes of battle through which he had passed, and the romantic changes of fortune in his chequered career. When here he was taken seriously ill, and lay down to die. What about his soul? Never a word. He loved to read the Word of God, and to hear it read, as it was continually read to him by his young nieces in turn; he was also pleased to be talked to on spiritual topics, and to have prayer offered at his bedside; but as to his own case, his lips were sealed. Day after day, night after night, passed; but the watchers by his bed could not draw from him or catch a single expression in reference to his soul's state. At length, one day the grave pallid countenance, the deeply thoughtful eye, brightened; and, in tones of rapture, wholly in contrast to his undemonstrative habit, he exclaimed: “I have Christ by the hand! I have Christ by the hand!”

In this new joy he lived, in this strong assurance he died. His long unbroken silence in regard to his soul had been

due to his profound thinking and his lack of assurance. At length, when by the teaching of the Holy Spirit he was enabled to grasp the marvellous significance and grace of the Saviour's words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and, "*Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out,*" he immediately passed out of darkness into light. In grasping the word of Jesus, he felt sure he had Christ by the hand. In that gracious invitation, he saw held out to him, a weary sinner, the Hand of omnipotent love, the Hand with the print of the nail in it. So calm and bright was the last stage of his life, that a rough man of the world, on visiting him, said, using a curious and homely metaphor, "He is being carried to heaven in a hand-basket." Yes: the basket was the Gospel of God's grace, and the hand that carried it was the Lord's.

This incident, and the last solemn scene of her uncle's life, made a deep impression on the tenderly-susceptible nature of Isabella, at that time some five years of age. She did not then understand that Christ's word is His hand: she fully believed that the Lord Jesus and Uncle Archie literally shook hands, as any two friends would do. She thought it beautiful; and fancied that when Christ saved her, He would shake hands with her in like manner. Uncle Archie parting with his friends around his bed, and bidding them a kind "Good-bye," just as if he was going away again to Spain, and dying with a sweet smile, was to Isabella one of those outstanding memories that never fail to touch the imagination and mould the character.

Some four years after this, Hannah was laid low in wasting sickness. For a whole year she pined away, all

the time rejoicing in the Lord, and spending her weary days and nights in prayer and praise and preparation for her departure. Shortly before her death, her brother announced to her the fact of his conversion, and his resolution to devote himself to the service of Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. Great was her joy: she broke forth in thanksgiving and praise. "My prayers are answered," she exclaimed; "my work is done. I prayed that you would be converted, and called into the ministry, and made instrumental in winning souls. The Lord has granted me my desire: I am satisfied; I have nothing to do now but to die!"

Her early death, her joyful end, her entrance into the gate of the City as if before our very eyes, added to the triumphs of her holy life. The family sorrow was an illuminated Gospel with a dark edging. Hannah's departure was at once an angel going and an angel coming. "Where the tree in the forest falls," some one has said, "there a fuller light shines in." Isabella had been the object of her sister's fondest love. During that long year of Hannah's illness she was every day, often all the day, beside her dying bed, whose growing lights and deepening shadows even a child could see. When Hannah's warm heart ceased to beat, Isabella's sorrow was touching to behold. The impression was too deep to be ever wholly effaced. The sweet memory was more than a beautiful dream—it was a living picture, which grew more vivid with the years. Her prayers, her serious thoughts, her religious strivings—received an impulse and a direction such as perhaps the living example could not have so efficiently imparted. For the departure of a loved one to

the world unseen frequently brings the invisible near, and gives it a definiteness, a colour, a tangibleness that ultimately becomes a spring of life in God to those who are left behind. The hallowed memory is a golden link entering within the veil. It is the pure, pale shadow cast by a sainted spirit, the refraction of a light too bright for mortal eyes. A sanctified sorrow is one of God's mightiest forces in the lives of men. So, man's life goes in tides; each tide in its ebbing and flowing prepares for and plays into the tide that follows. After her sister's death, little Isabella felt more than ever that she needed to be converted; and she often prayed, believing that somehow some day, if she kept on praying, she would be saved. But her faith in the efficacy of prayer not long after this sustained a severe shock. It happened in this way.

Her brother was taken severely ill, and lay in agonizing pain. Isabella, then a girl of eleven, betook herself to a place apart, and besought the Lord to take away the pain. Returning in full expectation of finding the sufferer relieved, what was her disappointment on hearing the same dolorous cry, and marking the signs of unabated agony. Again retiring to her little oratory, she prayed more earnestly, in most explicit terms reminding God that He was the hearer of prayer; and expressing wonder that He had forgotten to answer the first time. Again she returned; but only to find the sufferer no better, but rather worse. Once more she betook herself to the throne of grace, and poured out her heart in fervent pleadings and bold arguments; hinting, after the manner of a child, that if God did not answer this time, she would be very angry; there was no use praying, and—what then? Once again she repaired to the

bedside of her brother, feeling certain that now the answer would be given. It was not so. Then the little heart rebelled. She was angry with the Lord. "Did He answer prayer at all? Was it not a mere pretence? Or, perhaps He couldn't! Or, what if He didn't mind people being in pain? Worse still, maybe there was no God?"

This last thought filled the mind of the child with unutterable anguish. This was her first encounter with the devil on purely spiritual ground. She did not then know—what older persons are slow to learn—that no answer to prayer is sometimes the best answer; or that the real answer lies somewhere else than where we expected to find it. The answer often comes not in the little piece of money, we know, but in a mysterious cheque; not in the trinket we asked, but in a jewel of unknown value; not in the good desired, but in some evil, with a greater good at the bottom of it. Despite her bitter feelings, Isabella began to pray again: but one thing she yet lacked.

CHAPTER III.

Upbringing.



HOME, School, Church, and Nature—the last not least—had each its part in Isabella's training. Young life in Cullen was healthy, vigorous, and free. Plain and wholesome fare; familiarity with rigorous thrift in all things; strong wrestling with northerly gales blowing straight from the Pole; healthy exposure to every kind of weather; and abundant exercise in the open air all the year round—combined to develop a bold and joyous hardihood.

To look up through no veil of smoke into the clear blue sky, with its constantly-changing glories day and night, for the first twenty years of life, is itself an education. To look out summer and winter on the great ocean in its infinite moods and solemn grandeur is an inspiration for life. To look around on hill and dale, forest and field, the purple heather and the golden broom, is to study in the Creator's school. To stand by the shore on a summer evening and watch the fishing-boats pushing out to sea, or to count the sails as they return in the morning laden with the spoils of the deep, has a lesson of its own. To visit the old-world ruins of Findlater Castle on the rocky headland, with the ocean beating on three sides; to peer eerily into the vaulted, cell-like halls; to recal the legend of the baron's only son in his infant glee leaping from the nurse's arms at the open window, and dropping into the raging

waters far beneath, and instantly followed into the same dark grave in the angry sea by the despairing nurse—give a wing to fancy, and a hue to thought. To stand on the beach with the foam dashing on one's face, and with a heart at fever-heat, to watch the white billows breaking over the shipwrecked vessel on the rocks, and to witness the heroic efforts of the rescue, while man by man is brought safely ashore—is an experience never to be forgotten. To follow the fishing yawl in a gale as it makes for the sands; to see the ill-fated boat lifted high on the crest of a tremendous billow, and capsized; to hear that wild death-cry as the brave men go down—is a scene that traces ineffaceable mouldings on the innermost chambers of the heart. To roam among the rocks and gather shells upon the beach; to wade in the summer tide or bathe among the breakers; to explore the caves in the rocky headlands, and hear the flap of the wild pigeon's wing mingling with the echo of the moaning waves in the gloomy recesses; to climb the lofty Bin and gather blue berries and rasps and brambles in their season; to see the ten thousand sights and hear the ten thousand voices of Nature in her loveliest haunts and sweetest moods; to live and move and grow up amidst the murmur of the woods, the warbling of the birds, the babble of the brooks, and the psalm-like music of the sea—is to study at the feet of God, and learn pure, memorable lessons, that educate the senses in innocence; fill the imagination with divine pictures; ennoble taste, and become life-germs in the mind and heart. Happy is the child whose soul is open to their instruction, and who is nurtured among their genial influences through all the docile years!

All this formed part of Isabella's training. To her quick intellect, lively imagination, and keen sympathy with the beautiful, such schooling could not be in vain. In Nature's school there is no tension; no terror; no cram. Her method is quiet, gentle, insinuating. It works a real mind-growth—a capacity for thinking, feeling, judging; and thus forms a character strong enough to stand the wear and tear of life: while also it supplies stores of happy memories, more precious in after years than treasures of silver and gold. Often amidst the gloom and squalor of dingy courts and filthy lanes did the subject of our memoir in later years recal those peaceful scenes of early life. Her love of nature lent a deeper tenderness to her sympathy with the children of the slums: who, instead of woods and braes and wimpling burns, look only on slimy walls and loathesome gutters; instead of the blue heavens see only clouds of smoke; for air breathe poison; and for the songs of birds hear nought but the sounds of cursing and strife. No wonder that the inmost cry of her heart was, "Oh, give me back old Scotland, with its simplicity, its poverty, its virtue; and take away this pandemonium of city life, with its filth and fever, its greed and gaudy show, its sorrow and its sin!"

In the little royal burgh education was plentiful and thorough. First, there was the Dame's school, where the smallest of small boys and girls learnt to read and spell. It is not difficult to recal memories of the primitive school, held in the Dame's kitchen: the high stools and sanded floor; the accidental tumbles and forbidden grovellings beneath the "forms"; the painful experience of sharp incisions inflicted on bare legs by tiny but energetic

denizens of the sand, and still more memorable experience of the Dame's "tawse" or hand, both indeed leathery enough; the drawling lesson; the loud *b—y*, by, the long *g—o*, go; the deep droning of some, and heavy snoring of others; the harsh sound of the awful woman's voice ringing in our ears, more terrible than a thunderpeal; with the mingling screams of the small boy whose bare toes have suddenly become the object of special investigation by the teacher's ducks, as they take revenge on the covetous child of Adam for stealing their dinner of pease; which pease, boiled and swollen, looked so big and tasted so sweet as to be a very tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and hence, as in the case of older sinners, many a stolen sweetness, many a bitter tear!

Such was Mistress Betty Philp's seminary in the Red Row. It has long since ceased to be. The Red Row has become the Castle Terrace; the nation has succeeded the dame; the School Board has stepped into Mrs. Betty's shoes; and Mrs. Betty herself is in heaven. Yet, even in that humble school, a good foundation was laid.

The older scholars were trained in the Shorter Catechism; the Psalms of David; and the Proverbs of Solomon. What could be better for a young Scotchman with his supposed inborn metaphysical and theological propensities than the Shorter Catechism? What more appropriate to the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* than the matchless lyrics of Israel's sweet singer? Or what more in the line of the shrewdly practical, keen, canny Scot than the proverbs of the wise king? In those three books you have theology, poetry, and philosophy—a training at the very threshold of life at once intellectual,

moral, and religious; more thorough, more wholesome, and more effective than much that passes for education at the present hour. Where in all the wide range of philosophy or literature will you find a dozen words so profound and clear, so far-reaching and full of destiny, as the answer to the first question in the Catechism?—"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever." What a rush of hallowed and tender memories has filled the heart of many a grey-headed Scotchman at the very mention of the question!—"What is the chief end of man?" And how often have the great underlying principles of the answer been as compass and helm to the wandering Scot far out on the sea of life!

Though its lowest rung was near enough the ground, the ladder of learning mounted high. In the Grammar School the boys were trained in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics; and fully equipped for entering the University at Aberdeen, where they might win a bursary and carry honours. In the classes of this school the girls took their places side by side with the boys, and sometimes rivalled them even in classical and mathematical studies. There was also a lady's school, where the girls were trained in the higher accomplishments of female education. The subject of our memoir enjoyed a full share of the best scholastic advantages afforded by her native town.

Home training was thorough. Of books there was no lack, whether in theology or general literature. Some of these, such as the Scots Worthies and Bunyan's Pilgrim, were often read aloud; our father now and again calling a halt to make comments, often in a heroic strain, and always in a manner fitted to impress the young mind.

Reverence for the Word of God ; faith in the efficacy of prayer ; strict observance of the Lord's Day ; prompt obedience to parents ; an utter hatred of lies, selfishness, and all meanness—formed part of Isabella's training at home. Disobedience in word or deed was not allowed ; the sulky glance was reprovèd ; the wayward act was chastised. The discipline was stern, but wholesome : a life-blessing was in it.

The standard of duty was by no means low. On one occasion, when a lad of fifteen, I was sent by my father to the factor for the Earl of Seafield, to receive a sum of money due to him for a finished contract. On my return, the money was found to be largely in excess of the amount due.

“Go back with it,” said my father.

I demurred, saying, “The mistake is their affair.”

“True,” he replied ; “but that is no reason why we should be dishonest.”

“The factor will be in a rage at being found in an error,” I urged.

“Very likely,” was the reply ; “he is a proud man : but better anger him than anger God.”

“It will do to-morrow,” I said ; for it was now dark, a storm threatened, and the way was long.

“It must be done to-night,” said he, firmly : “to-morrow I may be dead, and I should not like to die with my character under a cloud. And, if alive to-morrow, I might be tempted to put it off further ; I might need the money, and under the pressure might take the use of it, with the intention of repaying it : and what a snare that would be ! No, no : either you or I must go with the money now.”

Accordingly I went. The darkness, the storm, the torrents of rain, and the wrath of the factor, who would rather have lost the money than have been convicted of such an error, made the night and the lesson for ever memorable.

Trained in the old Puritan theology of the Highlands our father held firmly the doctrines of grace. Conversion as a clear outstanding work of the Holy Spirit in the soul was kept well in view of the children. To be saved, they were made to understand, they must be born again. His own early observation gave emphasis to this fundamental truth. In his youth he had seen the great religious awakening that took place mainly under the preaching of M'Donald, "the Apostle of the North," and he was wont to describe to the family the solemn scenes he had witnessed—men smitten with a sense of sin crying aloud for mercy; wicked men turning from the error of their ways and leading a holy life. The oldest of the children can recal a warm discussion on the doctrine of regeneration between their father and the minister of the parish. The minister maintained that the man who paid his debts and lived decently needed no other title to heaven, or fitness for it; while Macpherson entrenched himself behind the words of the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Lord's Day was observed with profound reverence; some would say, with puritanic strictness. All the ordinary occupations and amusements were set aside. But there was withal special good cheer. The three meals of the day were richer than usual, and at all of them there was a special treat for the children. Of interesting reading there was no lack: for the older children there were religious

stories, wholesome and instructive; whilst the pictures of Scripture scenes and characters in the big Bible, together with a vast number of ministerial portraits in a huge pile of old evangelical magazines, furnished the younger members of the family with a delightful employment—which saved the hours of the sacred day from tedium; made salutary impressions; and even left happy memories for life. Pure and healthful is the atmosphere of a house in which the Lord's Day is wisely and reverently kept; it is the bracing air of God's own heaven, and infuses into the life-blood of children an element of moral strength and purity that is never lost. The Bible, the Sabbath, the house of God, and a holy life, stand and fall together.

In her home-training there was another element of a less common sort. Our mother was a sweet singer, and a rare story-teller. From her capacious memory she was wont to fetch stories and songs—stories tragic and humorous; songs full of pathos and tenderness, some of them composed by herself—causing the eyes of the young audience to glisten; while every tale and poem had its own lesson. Many an encore was given: nothing was too often told or sung. Here are some of her stories:—

When mother was young, a man in Inverness was arraigned for some great crime; and but for the fact that his mind was unhinged, he would have been condemned to death. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life. On the passing of the sentence, he uttered a loud cry—one word, and one word only. That word was "*Trocair!*"—the Gaelic for "mercy!" When lodged in the dungeon that was to be his home for life, he raised the same piteous

cry. At the midnight hour the city was startled by the piercing wail, "Mercy! Mercy!" Every night at the same hour the touching appeal was heard. In the stillness of a summer evening the voice of the prisoner would ring over the city; and often the dolorous cry mingled with the winter's eerie blast. For thirty long years that same word, big with the anguish of a broken heart, was nightly heard. The children growing up familiar with the cry named him Mercy: "That is Trocair," they would say. "Mercy" was all of language left the wretched man. At length reason returned, and with it the light of heaven dawned upon his soul. His cry for mercy was answered. Penitent and believing, joy filled his soul; he praised the God of his salvation, and died in peace; his prison cell the gate of heaven.

Lesson: Mercy is worth thirty years praying for; none ever sought mercy in vain.

Alister Ogg, a godly weaver, with his wife dwelt in a lonely hut with only "a but and a ben," the one apartment being kitchen, parlour, and bedroom; the other the workshop. One night a tramp came to the door and begged for lodgings. This was refused, there being no bed for him; but he would be content, he said, to lie among the yarn beside the loom.

"But what security have I that you will not steal the yarn?" said Alister.

"I will give you God for my security," replied the tramp.

"Excellent security!" said the old weaver: "I accept it."

In the morning Alister and his wife awoke to find that the lodger and the yarn were gone.

"Didn't I tell you?" said the wife.

"He gave me good security," was Alister's reply.

"All very fine," said she; "but God will not rain yarn from heaven upon you."

It was a day of gloom: the wife sulked and murmured; Alister fasted and prayed. The yarn was his neighbour's: his honour was in the balance; his living was at stake. At nightfall the door opened, the thief entered, and throwing the yarn on the floor, exclaimed, "There's your yarn! it's the heaviest load I ever carried."

"I quite expected that," replied the weaver, "your security was good."

The tramp, overtaken by a mist, had wandered in a circle on the hill all the day. Seeing a light, he made for it, and found himself in Alister Ogg's hut.

Lesson: Have faith in God--He is good security.

A soldier returning from the wars was making his way to his home in the Highlands, when he fell in with a traveller going in the same direction. Conversation led to the happy discovery that both were pilgrims to the better land, and very pleasant was their fellowship. On one point, however, they differed, and that was the relative importance of watching and praying in the Christian warfare. The soldier maintained that watching takes precedence; while the other held that prayer is more important. Long and earnestly did they discuss the question; each stood to his guns, and the battle was undecided. Coming to a wayside inn, they agreed to rest awhile. A refreshment was called for, and

the one pressed on the other the duty of asking the blessing of God on it.

“You say prayer comes first,” urged the soldier; “therefore it falls to you to ask the blessing.”

Accordingly the man of prayer proceeded, after the Highland custom, to offer a lengthened supplication, during which his fellow-traveller hid the refreshments under the table. On opening his eyes at the close of his long “grace,” the former expressed his amazement at the disappearance of “the creature comforts.”

“Ah! you see,” said the soldier, “watching comes first. Had you watched as well as you prayed, the thief would have had no chance. It is ‘*Watch and pray.*’”

A cobbler is hard at work on a Saturday night. His job must be finished with the week; the hour is late, the Sabbath is near. Despite his hurry, the attention of the busy worker is arrested by a strange spectacle: he sees the five finger-points of a gigantic hand rising slowly from beneath the ground near the stone on which he sits. A voice is heard, saying, “Seest thou that?” to which the cobbler replies: “I am seeing that, and I am sewing this.” The clock strikes eleven; the mysterious hand is steadily rising, and the awful voice is again heard, while the cobbler making the same reply renews his diligence. As each quarter of the hour passes, the desperate toiler hears the warning voice, and notes the progress of the apparition hand. Now he is on his last five minutes; again and for the last time the voice thunders in his ears, and he sees the mysterious hand raised clear above the ground. With the last minute the work is finished;

the clock begins to strike twelve; the cobbler springs from his seat, not a moment too soon; the giant hand descends upon the vacated seat with tremendous violence, leaving the prints of the five terrible fingers deep in the stone.

Lesson: An unseen Hand guards the sanctity of the Sabbath, and avenges its desecration.

A gentleman, residing near Fall of Foyers, Invernesshire, in consequence of intemperate habits, fell into frequent quarrels with his wife, who could not endure his drunken ways. One morning he was found dead at the foot of the cliff; but although sinister rumours as to the real cause of his death were whispered, no investigation was made. The widow was never seen to smile, and her little son became imbecile through the shock of his father's death. In the course of years the widow died. One day the lad exhumed his mother's body, and was found chopping the bones with a hatchet. In explanation, he said: "My mother killed my father with this little axe, and with it I must punish her: God has bidden me." The child had witnessed the midnight scuffle; had seen his mother deal the fatal blow; and then drag the body of her murdered husband to the crag and hurl it over.

The moral of this weird story was: "Be sure your sin will find you out, even if it be hidden with you in the grave."

A newly-married couple—young, handsome, rich, and allied to the best families in the county—amidst the joyous benedictions of their assembled friends, set out on their marriage tour, taking the little steamer up Loch Ness.

Within a few hours the boiler burst, the vessel sank, bridegroom and bride perished.

Lesson: Never count on earthly happiness until it is past; then discount it.

“It was this day twelvemonths that your father was drowned when trying to ford the river,” said a poor woman to her weak-minded boy.

“Had my father been going about seeking for a bridge the whole year, he would not have been drowned yet, mother,” was the lad’s reply.

Lesson: Better a roundabout way that is safe, than a short but dangerous cut.

“Mother, it is raining!” exclaims one, rushing into the house.

“Then we shall just do as they do in France,” is the reply.

“How do they do in France?”

“They let the rain fall.”

“O mother, I have lost my penny, the penny you gave me for running the errand.”

“You have? Don’t you know that any fool can earn money, but only the wise can keep it.”

Animals and insects—especially several kinds of spiders—of which our mother had a considerable knowledge, were made to do duty, in little fables, by representing the infirmities and foibles of human nature. When one’s shortcomings came to be identified with the tricky ongoings of a rascally spider, the lesson was not soon forgotten.

To one puling over an unappreciated meal mother says, "You are like the hungry fox trying to feed on an old bag-pipe; and as the pipes squeaked and droned whenever he pressed the bag, which was made of some animal's skin, he exclaimed, 'Ah! this is both meat and music!'" The mild sarcasm sets all a-laughing, and the dinner goes on merrily.

This daily play of wit and humour, the mother's stories, songs, and repartee; the father's glee when in the evening hours he relaxed into boundless merriment, often describing the incidents of the day with comic touches and hitting off characters by laughable names, and so setting all in a roar as cheery as the blaze upon the wide hearth—this innocent hilarity mingling with the severe discipline, the stern duty, the puritanic religion, rendered the home-training in the highest degree stimulating and wholesome. The warmth of affection, the prevailing joyousness, the unsophisticated naturalness and perfect openness, make the memory of those days like gleams from Eden—a long sunny summer, leaving a genial after-glow on life's sober year. Here Isabella learnt her best lessons.

Her girlhood was uncommonly bright and full of promise. Her personal beauty drew universal admiration; but this did not spoil her: from self-consciousness she was remarkably free. Healthy, energetic, affectionate, she was happy at work and at play. Her openness of character, sweetness of nature, and readiness to serve others, made her the friend of all. When skill, fine nerve, and cool head were needed, Isabella—canny, old-fashioned, and wise—came to the front. Somehow she could use her left

hand as effectively as her right one in everything except writing; and it was a saying among her comrades that "Isie Macpherson can do with her left hand what none of us can do with our right."

An early privilege enjoyed by Isabella was the love and prayers of several godly persons who were frequent visitors at her father's house. Among the rest and in particular was Mrs. G., a woman of rare intelligence, piety, and force of character. For some thirty years she came and went less in her capacity as nurse than as a Christian friend. During the last fifteen years of her life she, being poor though respectable, daily received a little portion from the house, which was carried to her by Isabella, the portion being doubled on Saturday in view of the Sabbath. Thus, day by day, from childhood to mature years, Isabella enjoyed the counsels, benedictions, and prayers, of one who lived "next door to Heaven"—a privilege second only in value and effect to the good influences of home itself. Perhaps this little service of charity—dispensed without ostentation and with perfect delicacy, and accepted without humiliation and with the gracious dignity of a saint—may have done something to foster in Isabella's sympathetic nature that delight in the poor themselves and in doing them good, which became one of the marked features of her character, one of the prevailing habits of her life. At any rate, that daily mission of love, attended by the blessings of the saintly old nurse through so many years, could scarcely fail to bear fruit.

Thus early was she trained in the office of the genial and bountiful visitor. So, too, she learned from her mother never to send a charity by a servant, but to convey

it in person or in some such way as would grace it with the dignity and character of friendship ; the gift no dole, but a token of love from friend to friend. For the same reason, after her mother's example, she always dressed in her best gown when visiting with alms ; a practice much appreciated by the poor, who dislike the eccentricity or meanness of apparel affected by some Christian workers. The lady visitor who would show respect to the poor, and be respected by them, must cultivate a wise self-respect, and shun all appearance of vainglory and shabbiness. Those who would worthily serve the Lord should eschew all guises and disguises ; shams and shows are alien to the spirit of Christ ; the very genius of Christianity is sanctified common-sense. There may be as much pride in an ugly bonnet as in a jewelled head-dress ; there is no more piety in the one than in the other. In such things as these the golden medium is Christian wisdom.


Two prominent features of her character even in girlhood were conscientiousness and generosity. With a quick apprehension of what was right and dutiful, she would be often putting others right or keeping them from going wrong ; and this she did with such gentleness and tact as not to awaken prejudice or wound pride. When her sisters were disinclined to attend the prayer meeting in church, she would insist upon their going ; and when argument failed she would take their wraps to them, lay them on their arms or shoulders : and so in the end invariably prevailed. From a child she was noted also for her generous ways. She kept nothing—could keep nothing ; not only sharing her own with others, but giving all away. She was thoughtful and wise beyond her years ;

but it was doubtless her kind-heartedness, a certain greatness of soul, that made her a power even then not only among her fellows but her seniors also. She loved much, and so was much loved.

Her standing in school and class was always in the front rank. Her teachers with unvarying testimony affirmed that she was easily first. In religious knowledge, her minister declared, she had no equal. It was well known among her compeers that in certain branches of learning she gave undoubted promise of attaining a high position, and probably making a name for herself. But just as prize on prize fell to her, and she was catching glimpses of future distinction, another vision dawned upon her, and the entire current of her life was diverted into a new channel. Of this we shall now speak.

CHAPTER IV.

Conversion.

OD has shattered my health ; but He has given me the full assurance of salvation. My doubts are all gone : I am on the hill-top, and have nothing to do but wait till He calls me home." Thus spoke Isabella's father as he trod the furnace of affliction.

For many years he had battled with doubts and fears. At length, out of those gloomy jungles of introspection where the lights are broken and misleading, where the soul is distracted and torn as it grapples with the thorns and briars of its own evil self-consciousness, he had emerged into the full liberty and rest of the gospel. From the Pisgah heights of a victorious faith and a full assurance he now beheld the Land of Promise smiling at his feet. The man who has sojourned long in the Valley of Humiliation can best appreciate the uplands of Beulah. Enjoying the witness of the Spirit and the liberty of the sons of God, he could now say, " I know Him whom I have believed ; and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." This incident is a link in our story.

In the autumn of 1859, Scotland was ringing with the echoes of the great revivals in America and Ireland. Union prayer-meetings were the order of the day. Prayer was

being marvellously answered; and many persons, especially young men, were being saved, often without the intervention of any human agency. A pulse of religious anxiety was secretly beating at this time in the little northern burgh. The air was full of an awakening element; the minds of many were haunted with thoughts of God and eternity. What was to be done? Advised by a member of his family, then on a visit to him, Donald Macpherson invited four or five godly men, representing the several religious denominations of the place, to meet for prayer and conference. The meeting was held in a room of his house. It was a humble beginning; but God was there. As they prayed, their hearts were filled with a blessed sense of the Lord's nearness and an expectation that He was about to do great things for them. The union for prayer thus formed speedily grew in numbers and in interest; and they were compelled by its success to transfer the meeting to the Congregational Chapel, where it became a focus of light and blessing to the town.

Meanwhile the little band of praying men had sent for Duncan Matheson, who came and preached. One Sabbath evening, in the Free Church, the Minister, Mr. McKay, was describing in glowing terms the work of grace in Ireland, and the scenes he had recently witnessed there, when a young man who had been impressed under the preaching of the Scottish evangelist cried aloud for mercy. The cry of the young man was like a stone cast into dark waters, sounding great depths and creating a thousand rippling circles. It was the signal of the Holy Ghost. The light of eternity was breaking in; the congregation was startled; the ancient cry, "What must we do to be saved?"

became the burning question of the hour. The fruits of that work remain. Some of the converts are now heralds of the cross, doing noble service at home and in heathen lands far away. As one result nothing was more marked than the new life, the fuller joy, the greater power, that came to many of the Christians. The Union Prayer Meeting became the centre of the movement. Here revived Christians poured out their hearts in prayer; here young believers delivered their first testimony; here inquirers waited for counsel; and here all the glad echoes were awakened in holy song as each young convert was ushered into light.

The connection of Donald Macpherson with this union for prayer was of brief duration; but of infinite moment to himself. One night, after taking some little part in the meeting, he was suddenly seized with an alarming illness: at the same time his bonds were loosed; his soul was flooded with joy in the Holy Ghost; and every doubt melted away in the cloudless sunshine of God's love. From this illness, although he lived nearly two years thereafter, he never recovered; and from that height of assurance and joy he never went down. Henceforth his time was spent either in rapt communion with God, or in guiding inquirers; in counselling young converts, and in fellowship with Christian friends. Whether the physical shock came before, or after, or simultaneously with, the spiritual visitation is not known. But so it was. Like Jacob, he had wrestled through a long, weary night till daybreak found him victoriously broken down, crippled, and blessed. By "terrible things in righteousness" prayer is often answered. As in the favouring gale the ship must be well ballasted, so the

third heaven's experience needs "the thorn in the flesh." The timid believer had trembled into triumph. His fears, like the hosts of Midian, fled when the light burst forth from the broken pitcher. Formerly he could only cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Now he could say, "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation."

Isabella had seen the little convention in her father's house; but just then went from home on a visit to friends. On her return she was confronted with two events which arrested her attention. Here was her father broken down and prostrate, yet no longer despondent and full of fears, but joyful and triumphant; receiving as he lay on his bed or sat in his chair the young converts and anxious inquirers, whom he wisely counselled or lovingly encouraged. The alabaster box was broken, and the perfume of the ointment filled the house.

The other event was a sister's conversion. "Isabella, I have found the Lord!" said Jeanie. This to her was a startling announcement. She knew much about the Lord; but to *find* Him—what was that? The old question arose at once, "How can these things be?" With the candour which was a leading feature in her character, she accepted her sister's testimony as genuine. Apart from personal concern in such matters, her inquisitive mind would have led her to demand what all this meant. But the personal question sprang to the front. What about herself? Where about was she now when the whole world around her was moving and changing? She had hitherto reckoned herself a kind of Christian; one on the fair way to become a

real good Christian some day. Now, however, it was a question darkened round with clouds of portentous doubt. As she pondered the matter, the light faded ; hope failed ; her early piety seemed to be but a child’s dream ; such faith as she had gave way like quicksands at every step, till at length the fair past wholly vanished, leaving only a dark future to be faced.

She was now face to face with the stupendous question of the second birth. To be well-born, she said, is not to be born again ; to be well-bred is not holiness to the Lord. Not to love God, it was plain, is sin ; to please one’s self rather than God, she confessed to herself, is sheer idolatry. “The wages of sin is death” had now a new meaning : the wages not of gross sin only, but of subtil heart-sin also ; not of many sins merely, but of *sin*. For long a vague sense of sin and its punishment had haunted her ; but it was like a speck of cloud on the distant horizon : now the whole heavens were darkened with the coming storm. The sword in its scabbard hanging high on the wall had boded no immediate danger ; now the gleaming blade was within an inch of her guilty head. The sentence of death took hold of her ; the whole of her past life looked like the sea-shore strewn with wreck, everything good was smashed, hopelessly broken to pieces.

This period of deep anxious questioning did not last long. She saw that “the wages of sin is death,” but she also saw that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”—and with the sentence of death in her soul she gladly accepted the “unspeakable gift.” The storm-cloud passed, the light of peaceful heavens broke upon her ; and she entered upon the new path with an

alacrity, a joyousness, and a firmness of step that characterized all her decisions, most of all this crisis in her history. She delivered her modest testimony to her comrades; joined the company of the young Christians; threw herself heartily into the earnest work of the period. In particular, she assisted in gathering the careless neighbours into the little meetings, a task for which her tact and persuasive manner pre-eminently fitted her; exercised her gift of song by leading the praise; counselled inquirers with a wisdom and tenderness that never failed her; and with all the enthusiasm of girlhood bounded along the new path, knowing as yet its sunshine, but not its shadow.

In a little town, when the Church slumbers, somehow there is no work to do; no door open; a thousand obstacles bar the way; nobody dares move. When the Spirit breathes and the Church revives, strange discoveries are made; souls are perishing; every door is open; obstacles vanish; and Christians find their hands, their tools, their work.

“Gude sakes, my dear,” says Mrs. — on being invited to the cottage meeting, “ye ken I’ve aye been a gude Christian, though naebody kent it. As sure as God made me, I’ve a’ my days said my prayerie, ‘Our Father which art,’ and I dinna need to be a revival.”

“But why did you hide your religion?” Isabella inquires.

“Oh, ye ken, I was ashamed to let that be kent.”

Such was the old moderatism, the religion of that time. It consisted in *saying* a prayer; it was ashamed of itself—yet it was self-satisfied; it left no room for grace. For Mrs. — to attend the gospel meeting was something not far from disgrace, although she was a mere heathen.

Meanwhile the visitor pursues her round, and the people assemble in a very humble cottage in a narrow lane. A blessing has come to the house ; the hut is mean no more ; Jesus has entered, and it is now a "palace of the King." The furniture is rude enough—just a few clumsy chairs and stools. The table or dresser serves for a bench, while the bed in a corner is occupied like a gallery by a bevy of girls who are the chief singers. The preacher is one of the newly-converted young men. After much trouble and exercise of practical engineering in finding seats and places for the crowd, the service begins. Isabella Macpherson is the leader of praise. Seated on the bed, she calls for the light—a penny candle bought in honour of the occasion. Mary C——, a woman of gigantic stature, raw-boned and fierce-looking, but of kindly nature, volunteers to hold the candle. Muddled with drink—her normal state—she rises, and, with the candle in her hand, reels and falls upon the bed. There is a scene. The poor soul, despite every remonstrance, insists on holding the candle ; nothing will quench her zeal in the good cause ; and although the taper sways to and fro like the mast-head light of a ship in a gale, the service, despite some mingled alarm and merriment, proceeds. Hymns are sung with ringing heartiness ; fervent prayers are offered ; burning words are spoken ; simple souls get a lift heavenward ; and some consciences feel the touch of God.

On another occasion the preacher is a youthful student, who, as the result of his recent conversion, is earnestly setting his face toward the office of the ministry, and is not slow to deliver his hearty testimony and exercise his gift. To-night there is no candle, probably because there

is no penny to buy one. At any rate, the light is from the old-fashioned "crusie," a rude, open, cobble-shaped iron lamp, filled with oil made of fish liver, and smelling horribly; the wick a peeled rush from a neighbouring swamp. To enable the preacher to read his small-type Bible, the lamp is removed from its accustomed nail at the cheek of the hearth. To carry it over the heads of so many persons is not easy. A sudden movement of the swaying crowd upsets the lamp, and its contents descend in full stream upon the back of the preacher—an anointing he had not bargained for. Who that knows the fearful stench will not pity the preacher in his sorry plight! Light out; preacher drowned in the essence of fish guts; the singer in distress; the youngsters snickering; the mistress raging; confused voices giving confounding orders; Mary C——, the giantess, plunging about in the darkness, and, in her zeal for order, making confusion worse confounded—the beginning of the Gospel meeting is not very full of promise.

Yet all is set a-going again; the chaos gives way before the sweet influences of the singing and the praying, while the preaching, though, like the oil, it has a strong odour of home production, is downright and telling. In some grand church an incident far less disturbing would have ruined the fine choral service: but revival meetings are hardier things, their strength and glory being not in the form but in the spirit.

CHAPTER V.

Lights and Shadows of Life in the Slums.

FOR a year after her conversion Isabella remained at home, mainly occupied in private teaching; while her leisure hours were spent either in household duties or in strenuous efforts to promote the cause of Christ. It was a brief but helpful apprenticeship for a wider sphere. A girlhood of more than common brightness, rendered doubly beautiful by the grace of God, was joyfully laid on the altar of the Lord; she was now well-equipped for service.

In the summer of 1861, she removed to Dundee to keep house for her brother, the present writer. Leaving home for the first time, her parting with friends was an ordeal severely trying to her affectionate nature. Her father spoke as a dying man, and bade her farewell till the heavens should be no more. When, as from the brink of eternity, he counselled her to cleave to the Lord and serve the God of her fathers, and blessed her, saying she would never again see his face in life, the scene was one of indescribable tenderness. Weeping bitterly, she tore herself away from her dying father's presence and the home of her affections, and, as he said, she saw his face no more.

The duties of her new position were discharged with admirable diligence, fidelity, and prudence. Her house-

keeping she ever regarded as her first Christian work. Nor was she slow in putting her hand to the work of winning souls, especially in connection with the evangelistic and home-mission efforts of our congregation.

One of our open-air preaching stations in Dundee was the corner of Hilltown and Rosebank Streets. Here, in 1861, I found a pulpit on an outside stone stair. The poor people gathered to the preaching, the first effect of which was visible in the washed faces and mended garments of the hearers. By-and-by they pressed nearer, began to shake hands, and sometimes drop a tear with the remark "It's a grand thing to be saved, sir!"

"It is. Are you saved?"

"That's a serious question, sir," is the truly Scottish reply.

"Have you not accepted Christ?"

"I canna say that, sir."

"What's the hindrance?"

A shake of the head and a gush of warm tears make answer. The Holy Spirit was working, and souls were saved at that corner.

The recent religious awakening had provided us with plenty of workers, and we began a mission. A little weaving factory in the street was rented; the old looms were sold for firewood; and the room was fitted up for a meeting house. Soon the place became too narrow for the work, and we purchased a piece of ground on which a mission hall was built. Here we carried on a Sabbath school; a day school; evening classes; evangelistic services; a penny bank; and in short every kind of good and useful work. In the course of years we built a church, in

which a congregation was gathered. Thus a thoroughly organized Home Mission was constituted and vigorously worked.

The field of labour was a wilderness full of briars and thorns. Poverty, squalor, drunkenness, vice of every kind, utter godlessness, reigned in many a court and lane. The vicissitudes and trials of the Mission is too long a story to tell here : but the blessing of God rested on it. Begun in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it was eminently a soul-saving work ; and a soul-saving work it has happily continued to be. It was on this field that Isabella Macpherson began her work in 1861 : and here she continued to labour for seven-and-twenty years.

Let us visit the scene of Isabella's labours : a single court will show the character of the district. A dying man who claims me for his pastor, though I do not know him, desires to see me. Our visitor will show us the way. It is Saturday evening, and there is already an unusual stir : there is always something unusual in the air of the district on the last night of the week. There is a general cheeriness : the week's work is done ; wages are in hand ; comforts for the day of rest are to be procured ; a genial, hilarious spirit prevails. Even the penniless are excited and hopeful ; they may share in the good that is going ; in any case, they feel justified in making provision for the morrow by recourse to the pawnshop. Everybody is dramming, the first stage of which is marked by noisy jubilation, and a generous treating all round. The most besotted creature in the slums thinks that Saturday night, the Sabbath also if possible, should be a season of joy and goodwill. Alas ! for the form and the fruit of it all. If you keep your eyes

open, you will be surprised at the sights you see—the incidents, curious, humorous, pathetic, you encounter in the course of an hour or two.

A trumpet-like voice sounds in our ears: “Gather out! gather out!” is the cry. Here is old Charlie with his barrow and “candy”: the children are crowding around him with a rag or a bone to be exchanged for a small portion of the coveted sweet. Charlie is a picture: he might pass for a bishop; so solemn is his countenance, and so picturesque his dress. His sleeves long and loose; his chief garment gownlike and flowing; his legs curiously begirt; his shoes antique; his hat as like a shovel as it is like anything else in the world; while his rich, sonorous voice would make the aisles of a cathedral ring. To the slum child Charlie is a merchant prince, his barrow a grand bazaar.

The entrance to the close or court is by a narrow passage which we find blocked by two drunken men. They are shaking hands, and swearing eternal friendship. In proof of his affection one says, “If God shpares me till the morn, I’ll come doon and shee you.” The other, not to be behind in generous regard, throws himself into an attitude, and laying the palm of his hand with force on the breast of his friend, responds with equal magnanimity saying, “And if God does not spare ye till to-morrow, I’ll releashe ye from y’r engagement.” They part; and one of them with much plaiting of feet enters the passage. Again our way is blocked: the drunken man must have a rest. Leaning his back against the wall and stretching his legs across the passage he soliloquizes in a pious strain. “Yes, as sh’ hymn says, by George, there’s no rest for the weary.” He

quotes from memory. At length he moves on, and we enter the court.

It is long, narrow, and dingy; the walls on either side are dilapidated and slimy; the gutters are full; doors and windows are sadly out of repair; doorsteps worn away; outside stone stairs rickety and unsafe; gloomy cellars below; overhanging cabins like crows' nests above; clothes out drying on lines crossing in all directions, like spiders' webs—and such strange garments, full no doubt of wonderful histories, but you need not eye them closely except to keep your head from contact.

The court is lively, everybody is in motion: some very drunk, some very sober. A cloud of smoke rises from the gutter: a man on fire! As he rolls, dead drunk, in the mud, a quantity of matches in his pocket, crushed and kindled, send up a horrid smoke. His wife and a female friend are rolling him about and searching him. "Are ye burnin' afore your time, ye brute!" exclaims the wife, with a profane expression, adding "Whar's your siller?" Raising him up, the women fix him against the wall, one holding his arms cross-like against the stones, while the other searches his pockets for what of the week's wages may have survived the public-house. The money secured, they let him go, and the sot tumbles over in a heap. "Ay, ye're a bonny man," says the wife, as she goes her way; "lie there till ye cool: ye're nae fit to be meat to the cats."

Being on hand-shaking terms with everybody in the court, we are hindered, and again fall in with the drunkard we met in the entry. Knowing that shaking hands with a drunken man is a tedious and unprofitable business, we

hurry past him, while he cries after us, "There's the minister fleein', fleein', just like as if the deevil was at his heels."

"Ay, and the deevil is at your heels too, Willie," says a little sharp-eyed, witch-like old woman, with a large beggar's basket on her arm; "but ye're no fleein' from him, and that is hoo he has trippit y'r heels, and gotten ye fairly intil his hands."

"Ay, but if Jesus Christ cam doon the closs, Nanz, He would shak hands wi' me!"

"If Jesus Christ cam doon the closs, Willie, ye would get a hecklin. D'ye think He would lat you haud the bottle to y'r head that wye? Mon, y're fechtin' wi' God, and y're sure to get your licks some day. The piper's ay to pay, ye gouk (fool); and he's a gey piper to pay, I'll warrant ye."

A pale-faced girl, of some thirteen years, rushes out of a house, and throws herself down on the stone stair, crying bitterly. She is a good girl, and gives her mother every penny of her wages, week by week. She has managed, in the course of months, to purchase for herself a jacket for the Sabbath-school and the meetings. Her mother bids her take the jacket to the pawn-shop; she refuses, and is cruelly beaten—the mark of the poker being only too visible on her arms and shoulders. The poor child trusts in Jesus; but all the same the poker hurts her, and her mother's wrath is hard to bear. Out comes the mother, bound for the pawn-shop, with the jacket and other articles of dress in a bundle. The girl sobs: I remonstrate, but in vain.

"How will you answer to God for this conduct?" I demand.

“I’ll tak God in my ain hands,” is the graceless reply.

Up the steps from yon cellar comes a lad in company with a soldier, followed by a quiet-looking, decent woman, who is weeping aloud. The boy has enlisted; he her only son, she a widow. She throws her arms around her boy’s neck; he struggles to tear himself away. “O my poor laddie! I’ll maybe never see you again!” Poor mother! she has sudden visions of war, and wounds, a dying soldier, and much more. “O God, Ye took his father from me; Ye might spare my laddie to me!”

Here comes a well-known character with a tub on his head and a woman at his heels. “Ye villain, would ye tak an’ sell my verry tub I mak my leevin’ wi’?” A sharp tussle: the man, his wife, and the tub, next moment are on the ground. Down the court rolls the tub, making straight for a child whom it knocks over and imprisons against the wall. The screams of the little one bring upon the scene its mother, who, snatching up her bairn, breaks out in the strain customary on such occasions. Meanwhile our hero of the tub has got two or three smart blows from his wife, on whom he vows speedy vengeance, as he goes his way to seek some other means of raising the wind.

Suddenly there is a rush of children into the court with a policeman in the midst of them. The man of the law strides along the alley, enters a house, and, in a twinkling, comes out again with a tall, dissipated, villainous man, whom he “rushes” along amidst the cries of the boys and girls, “That’s him! that’s him!” Who is “him”? This is M——, a notorious drunkard, who for many years has been the curse and terror of his family. Up two

stairs lies the dead body of his daughter, a godly girl, who has died of consumption; while another daughter, a sweet-looking girl, in her teens, lies dying of the same fell disease. The unnatural father has seized the occasion to return to the house, which he had laid waste, and from which his wickedness had banished him; but it is only to blackmail his wife. He demands money, threatening, if he is denied, to prevent the burial of his daughter. This fails, and he then threatens to cast the dead body of his child out of the window into the street, and coolly proceeds to execute his purpose. A terrible scene follows—a struggle over the corpse. When we go in, the mother is swooning, a crowd of women are trying to restore her; the one daughter sleeps calmly enough in her shroud, while the other is crying, and coughing, and spitting blood—suffering an anguish of mind worse to bear than her fatal disorder.

Down a flight of stone steps, and in a gloomy cellar, I find the man who sent for me. Enormously swollen with dropsy, sodden, panting for breath, the dying man sits in a corner of the wretched hovel all alone. He cannot lie down, night or day; he never sleeps, or if he does, it is only for a minute, for he drops off his chair; and many a fall has made sleep a greater terror than the sufferings of his waking hours. But he is near his end, he says; and he does not mind. Can nothing be done? I search about, and find a rough deal table, the only thing approaching the nature of furniture in the room, and this I fix in front of the dying sufferer, so that he can lean upon it, and when he sleeps be kept from falling from his chair. The poor man is full of gratitude; he had never

thought of it, and there was nobody to think for him. He tells me the rest of his story. He never saw the inside of a church or any religious meeting-house. One day he stopped and listened to the preaching in the open-air at the corner of Ann Street, where we usually held a meeting. There the Lord met him, opened his eyes, saved his soul. Poverty, bad health, misfortune, prevented him from realizing the fondly-cherished desire to attend the church and join the fellowship of the saints. Now he is dying, he is happy in Christ; his sins are forgiven; he is waiting to be called home; he will soon be in the presence of the Great Redeemer. He sent for me in order to bear his testimony to Christ, and to encourage us in our work. The common faith and hope made us warm friends and good fellows in a trice. After conversation, with reading the Word and prayer, we parted. It was our first meeting, and our last; our first parting, and it will be our last. He had never seen a pulpit or a pew, a communion-table or a baptismal service; but he had seen the face of God, and is now in the presence of the King. From that dank cellar to glory; from poverty and dropsy, from solitude and sleeplessness, to being with the Lord—what a change! As we went up the stone steps out of that dingy cell, we could hear the voice of the dying man praising the Lord and praying a blessing on us; and we felt as if the angels of God were going down while we were coming up.

Let us look in on the old couple in the next house. Not long before this, it fell to me to carry to them the sad tidings of the death by drowning of their son, the youngest and last surviving of eight children. To-night their sorrow is as keen as ever; but there is not a murmur. The old

woman sways to and fro, raising her hands in passionate, hysterical agonies of grief, while her husband is suffering more, but saying less.

“Oh, I ken, sir,” she says, “it was God’s hand, and we maun say naething against that; the appointed time was come. But it’s hard. We’ve seen seven o’ them carried oot at that door, but it was naething to this; they were a’ weel ta’en aboot, an’ oor poor sailor laddie had nae sheet but the cauld water. Oh, if he had been hame, an’ deet afore oor een like his brithers an’ sisters! O sir, it’s sair eneuch to see them dee an’ to close their een; but I canna bear this. I wauken in the nicht, an’ I see the ship an’ the waves, an’ poor Davie strugglin’ amo’ the jaws, an’ ae nicht I heerd a cry; it was Davie’s voice plain an’ clear. It jist minded me o’s cry oot there in the closs ae day, when he fell frae the tap o’ the cla’es-pole he was aye sae fond o’ climmin’. Weel, I thocht he cried, ‘Mither! Mither! Mither!’ an’ syne there was a great silence, an’ I thocht I heerd the sough o’ the wind in the ship’s rigin’. O my poor Davie! Why was there naebody to throw a rope or somethin’? O my ain laddie, I’ll never see you again! My bonnie laddie, my Davie: he was kind to me an’ his father, an’ a’body.”

As she went on in this strain, the old man kept saying at intervals:—

“It had to be, it was God’s will, woman: we maunna fa’ oot wi’ God. The Lord took the buryin’ o’ him intil His ain han’, an’ happit Davie in His big kirkyard.”

As we go out we come upon two lads of brutal look, tormenting a cat in a corner of the yard by setting a little ugly dog on it. A thin, starved-like old man carrying a

crushing load of jute-bags, by the sewing of which he has earned the few pence that will bring him the only heaven of comfort the Sabbath yields to him, stops, and looking out from underneath his burden, remonstrates with the boys for their cruelty. In return for his interference they only mock. He threatens to fetch the Police. "The Police dinna middle wi' cat fights," is the sarcastic reply. As the old man goes away with his load the lads fling after him the waggish taunt, "Oh, he'll be the cats' Bobby!"

See that little fellow, unwashed, unkempt, with rags enough to cover only the fifth part of his body, trundling his mother's pot-lid for a hoop up and down the court! His joy is full; he is as jubilant as the conquering hero of a great battle, as happy as any princeling in the royal nursery.

"What will your mother say to you, Tommy, about her pot-lid?"

"She's nae needin' 't, ye ken: there's nae tatties in the hoose."

"But you may break the lid."

"Oh, but I'll mak' a new ane when I'm big."

"You love your mother, Tommy?"

For a moment the child was silent, and then with a whispering voice replied, "When I grow to be a man, I'll no lat my mither greet. I'll big (build) a hoose for oursels, an' I'll buy meal an' tatties an' a' thing."

All this meant that the poor mother had been crying because she was summoned to leave the house, not being able to pay the rent. No food, no fire, no house—what a battle with despair! We have seen a decent widow with her two or three bairns standing at the close mouth beside a pitiful little heap of sticks and rags, her household gear;

the rain pouring in torrents ; the children crying ; ordered out of the house by the landlord ; ordered off the street by the policeman ; ordered out of the world by its grand civilization ; and when her little daughter said, " O mither, would it no be better if we were a' dead an' awa' wi' father ?"—do you wonder that the anguished mother's heart gave way, and she swooned and fell among the soaking heap of stuff, and seemed to the passers-by, as she lay there, only a bundle of rags ?

What a mixture of good and evil, what a blending of light and shadow, one finds in a single lane or court ! Heaven, earth, and hell, are strangely mixed up in the history of one slum. And yet it is much the same in the world's best society. The mahogany, upholstery, varnish, millinery, fine talk, skin-deep morality, make small difference in the sight of the heart-searching God. The essence of evil in the slum is sin ; and, God knows, that essence is not improved by being sweetly scented with the rose-water of refined manners and tastes. But the picture has another side. One is struck with the brave, kind, magnanimous spirit shown, often as a mere matter of course, in those miserable dens, where some of the finest elements of a noble character may now and then be found. One day I met on the street a little ragged boy, head bare, legs and feet bare, one arm exposed to the shoulder, the other partly covered, a few tatters about his loins—a too familiar picture of squalor, a child of the slums. I did not know him ; nor did he know me. He was making for the centre of the town. He had wandered into the country, probably the first time in his life, nature in him having somehow got a sniff of nature outside of him ; and he had gathered

in the ditches by the roadside some wild, garish things which he took for flowers, and these he held in his hand with a firm grasp and an admiring look. Seeing me looking and thinking I was admiring his flowers, he stopped, selected the biggest and loudest of them, and stepping up to me presented it with all the grace of a perfect gentleman, and then bounded away happy in the belief that he had made me as happy as himself. I was taken aback; no gift ever went so directly to my heart. As I stood looking after the poor child hastening home to some wretched hovel with his handful of ditch flowers to cheer a sick mother or a dying sister; when I reflected on his generosity and magnanimity, for he sought no reward but the joy of sharing his little all with others—my eyes grew dim, and I vainly strove to hide my emotions from the passers-by.

All around this district Isabella laboured. To her no court was too dingy; no house too disreputable; no family too hostile; no sinner too debased. With the light of the gospel in her hand she often penetrated into a darkness that could be felt. There were dens of rowdies; dens of thieves; dens of infamy; dens of devilry: but with a firm step and a cheery voice she made her way into those hells, sometimes to be turned to the door by hands of violence and amidst a storm of imprecations; sometimes also to be received as an angel from heaven by a wretched creature sick of sin, a soul suffering from the terrible recoil of conscience. To pluck that one brand out of the fire was her business—a desperate work.

CHAPTER VI.

Pioneering.



WORK for God in the slums is the hardest work. Its cross is heavy, its discipline severe. It needs the loftiest courage; the most heroic endurance; a faith that never falters; a love that never tires. Put no hand to it without a purpose as pure as the heavens; take no step in it save in the clear footprints of the Master. If a man wants to know his true Christian stature, let him go down to the slums and stand up there for God. If one would discover how far short he comes of perfection, let him become a scavenger in those gutters of sin.

Would you find out how much you can love your enemies and bless them that curse you? An infallible test awaits you in the malignity and brutality of our city hells.

Would you exercise yourself in the purest spirituality and the holiest walk? Then in God's name enter the lists against all the disorder and dirt, the drink and devilry, of those noisome dens. If you would have the fullest understanding of Christ's mission into a world of sinners, sell yourself, and die daily for the squalid children of vice and infamy. If you would taste the most Christ-like joys, if you would achieve the noblest triumphs, and win the richest rewards, then go down to that sea of misery, drink

of its bitterest woes, and be the comrade of Him who was the Man of Sorrows. Such is work in the slums. Let me here give a few illustrative incidents from the experience of Isabella Macpherson.

One evening she enters a room where a man with a galvanic battery is administering a shock to another man suffering from rheumatism in his feet. The battery man is proud of his galvanic wisdom, and pours the healing influence upon the bare feet of the sufferer. Our visitor politely offers the scientist a tract, and invites him to the meeting. He rudely refuses the tract, and declines the invitation : he believes in nothing of that kind.

“ Do you not believe in God ? ” she asks. “ No.”

“ Or in a hereafter ? ” “ No.”

“ Have you not a soul ? ” “ No : I believe that when man dies, there is an end of him.”

“ Then, you are just a beast.” “ A beast ! how dare you say so ? ” Drawing himself up proudly, with his hand on his battery, he added, “ I am *a man*.”

“ But you said you have no soul, and that when you die you perish like the brute ; I am only going by your own account of yourself.”

The battery man grew pale, and raged furiously, whilst our visitor spoke of death, judgment, and eternity. The rheumatic patient seemed to listen as for life : above the rheumatic pains, above the galvanic shock, rose the question of the soul. That night, despite his lameness, he appeared at the meeting, and, in conversation, cleared himself of all sympathy with the infidelity of the galvanic battery man. He had received a shock from the batter-

of the visitor ; and was resolved, whatever might become of his rheumatic limbs, not to lose his soul.

One Lord's Day she found herself in the house of a well-dressed man who was reading a newspaper—his wife and seven pretty children sitting around him. Her gentle words were met with scorn. He had no religion, no God—and he wanted none. Appealing to his parental affection she said, “But what about these beautiful children? Will you not let them learn about the Saviour?” Usually the worst of parents desire their children to be better than themselves. In this instance it was not so: the heartless father was resolved his children should never learn religion. “At least,” said Isabella, “you will let me pray for the dear little ones?” Dropping on her knees, she began to pray for a blessing on the house and family. Instantly the man sprang to his feet, and bending over her, broke out into roaring and howling, till at length, her voice being drowned, she was compelled to desist. As she went out and closed the door behind her, the man continued to yell in sounds such as she, familiar as she was with noises of every kind, declared were almost fiendish. He had won a melancholy victory: *he had succeeded in preventing his children from hearing the voice of prayer.*

In another house she found a burly working man with three stout sons. Neither he nor they would listen to her. All her kind words were met with terrible blasphemy. The language of this man was too shocking to be quoted in any form. He swore in a manner of his own, cursed God and the visitor, and seemed as if he might die in the paroxysms of his fury. She waited

patiently, as was her wont, in the hope that the storm would pass, and then in the succeeding calm her opportunity would come. She waited in vain. The tempest of profanity waxed worse and worse. At last she stretched out her hand in a commanding attitude, and with a look that for a moment overawed this bad man and his sons she secured silence.

“I have come here to deliver a message from God,” she said, “and in His name I will deliver it. You have blasphemed that holy name; you are trampling under foot His holy law; and you are deliberately rejecting His offered mercy. In a little while that God whom you are reviling will take the breath from you and your sons; your faces will be white in death; and your naked souls will appear at the Judgment seat; and what will you say when for your blasphemy and wickedness the sentence goes forth against you? Oh, will you not listen to the voice of the merciful God and turn to Him while.....?”

Here the storm of cursing and blasphemy burst out in fresh and more terrible fierceness. Aided by his like-minded sons, the man rose and with violent hands thrust her out. The elder who accompanied her was overwhelmed with sorrow. “To see that noble woman so shamefully treated went to my heart,” says he; “I felt a lump in my throat; and when we were hurled outside and the door bolted behind us, I looked up into her face and said something, but the only answer I got was a heavy sigh, and it was ten minutes before either of us broke the silence.”

Down in a dingy cellar, scarcely penetrated by the light of day, she finds a family in abject poverty. Two or three

rude sticks in the name of furniture; bed with little else than the boards to sleep on; no fire; no food; sheer starvation—such is their condition. Although they are without God, the trouble is not drink, nor vice of any kind: it is want of work. The children are ragged and wan; the mother bloodless and sad; the father a skeleton gaunt and pale, and no wonder, when for whole days he tastes nothing but a drink of water. Oh the tears of that mother; the cries of those famishing children; the silent agony of that despairing father! But a little way off men are rolling in wealth and living in luxury, spending in a single night's feasting more than would supply the wants of that family for a whole year.

Our visitor provides food and other needful things. Her sister C. obtains employment in out-door work for the father of the family, buys him a shovel, and thus puts him in the way of earning an honest livelihood. The happiest results followed: house comfortably furnished; children clothed and schooled; parents members of the Mission Church—a whole family snatched from ruin and restored to God and happiness. The twin evils of paganism and poverty have now for years given place to the blessings of piety and plenty; and from amongst the ten dutiful sons and daughters one has gone forth as an evangelist to a distant land.

“I cannot help asking,” writes this gifted young man, “why God should have taken me, a poor mill-boy, and given me the privilege of leading scores of souls to the feet of Jesus. In ten or eleven months I have seen over a hundred souls professing salvation. . . . Already some of the converts that God has given me in this country have

volunteered for the Lord's work. . . . It is my determination to live near to God, and in such a position as He can use me for His own glory and the salvation of souls."

One Sabbath night she came upon a company of shoemakers in a garret, busy at work. They had been drinking, and were in a hilarious mood—roaring and laughing, as they worked, with amazing enthusiasm. Had a spirit direct from the other world appeared, they could not have been more startled. She opened fire. They replied by using their hammers with deafening effect. Nothing daunted, she persevered. She appealed to their manliness: were they afraid of what a woman might say? Silence followed this appeal, and she poured out a torrent of warning and entreaty. In reply, one of them in a mocking strain asked if she would like to see them going barefoot.

She answered, "Better go barefoot to heaven than go well-shod to hell."

"Oh," exclaimed the mocker, "I mean to have my fun out to the end of the chapter!"

"Very well," she replied; "but what about the ending of the chapter? Did you ever see or hear of one making fun in the throes of death?" No, he had not.

"Well, then," she said, "why not?"

Solemn and kind words followed. So she won a victory, although probably enough it was only a temporary one. At all events she left with them something to think about, and there was quite a hush when she came away.

On Sabbath nights she frequently found women washing or baking. The sudden surprise left them no time to

invent a decent excuse for desecrating the Lord's Day ; and it was curious to see the too-quickly conceived lie sticking in the throat.

“Oh, what a rating I got from her!” said one to her neighbour ; “she caught me baking, but she'll never catch me again.”

At Christmas and New Year's time she frequently found the houses scenes of revelry and drunkenness on the Lord's Day. Not seldom on those occasions she noticed side by side on the table a bottle of whiskey and a copy of Burns' songs. One Sabbath night she came upon a company of men and women carousing. Pointing to the song-book and the bottle she said : “Are these your Bible and Sacrament?”

A deep silence followed the question : the revel was suspended. Most of those people, though they had sunk very low, retained some memory of better things. A little reverence for the things of God lingered in their very blood. In early life they had seen the snow-white cloth on the Lord's Table ; they had seen the elders amidst a solemn hush carrying round the memorials of the Saviour's death ; and the Bible had still an awful meaning even for them. Not a voice was heard, not a head was lifted, while our visitor set before the revellers *life and death—the blessing and the curse*—and with tears pleaded with them to turn from their evil ways

John M—— was a worthless, drunken fellow. One day in March, 1869, he was sitting in a public house with one of his associates in sin. Suddenly a voice as if from out of the unseen world said to him :

“John, you'll have to drop this way of drinking.”

He started to his feet, took his hat, and said to his companion ; “ William, I’m to drink no more with you or anybody else.”

Looking at him in amazement his friend said, “ What’s the matter with you, Jack ? ”

Without another word John left his comrade and the public house, which he never again entered. The Spirit of God was now working in his conscience with great power. His sense of sin and danger was so overwhelming that he was no longer able to continue his work as a handloom weaver. Bending over his loom with his Bible in his hand, the tears streamed down his cheeks until his vest was wet and the water trickled from his clothes. His anguish continuing he left the workshop, and spent his time in wandering in the fields and praying for mercy behind hedges, making the solitude vocal with his cries. At length his strength failed ; the protracted agony compelled him to take to his bed.

Our visitor took me to see him. He lay on a bed of rags. Every bone in his body, he said, ached—not because of the hard boards, but because of the spikes of his own sins on which he was now impaled. From sheer distress of soul—no longer able to work, or eat, or sleep—he was the image of despair. As he told me the story of his wicked life and his anguish, the very bed shook with the convulsions of his terror. No human voice could be more distinct to his ear than was the voice of an angry God speaking to his conscience. He was being borne, he said, by an invisible, irresistible power to the Judgment-seat, where in all justice God was bound to condemn him, and see him duly damned. He wished to repent, but could not : he felt he

could as easily fetch tears out of a millstone as one pang of genuine godly sorrow out of his bad, bad heart. Besides, he believed it was too late in the day for him to repent; and there remained for him nothing but a “fearful looking for of judgment.”

In a long conversation I endeavoured to show him the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, bringing him face to face with this word: “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life”; and left with him the solemn alternative—to receive Christ or reject Him; to be crucified with Christ, or be a crucifier of Christ.

Hastening to the mission hall where we were then carrying on evangelistic services, I stopped the evangelist who was speaking, stated the case of John M— and requested special prayer on his behalf. Next Sabbath morning he rose early and sought retirement in the country. In a secluded spot by a dyke-side, with a little brook babbling at his feet, he read his Bible and cried to heaven for his very life. Again and again he read, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” Light dawned with “whosoever believeth.” The name of Jesus now became indescribably precious: it came to him once and again with sweetness and power; it overcame him. He now took the Lord at His word, and found perfect rest. Here he remained till the afternoon, “weepin’ an’ sobbin’” for joy. Having washed his face in the stream, to remove the traces of weeping, he returned home; and as he was sitting down to dinner in the garret where he resided with his family, he looked up to the little “sky light,” the

only window in the room. "Just then as my eye caught a glimpse of those heavens where my blessed Jesus was, a second ray of divine light fell on my heart. This so overpowered me that I had to quit my dinner and rush off to my brother's house to tell him that

"My happy soul was free ;
For the Lord had pardoned me,
Hallelujah to Jesus' Name!"

John M—— was henceforth a new man. After some years his health gave way, and being no longer capable of manual labour he employed his time in walking out into the country, visiting farm-houses and servants' bothies; distributing tracts; speaking for Christ, and offering prayer as he found opportunity. Possessing a rare gift of forcible speech, he could set forth the plan of salvation in terms singularly clear, crisp, and telling. Thus he spent for God what time had been snatched so miraculously from the wreck of his life. His sudden arrest by the Holy Spirit in the public house shows, what we have often seen, that in a time of gracious visitation God is pleased sometimes to work without any human agency. But John M—— owed much then and afterwards to the sympathy and aid in many ways of our visitor, Isabella.

CHAPTER VII.

A Valley of Blessing.



“CAN you preach?”

“I try to preach, sir.”

“What do you preach?”

“Christ and Him crucified.”

“Ah! what do you know about that?”

“I know Him to be the Saviour, for He has saved me; and I just preach what I know.”

“Do you think to convert anybody?”

“No, sir; but the Holy Spirit can, and He can use me to convert, if He will.”

“Are you fit to go into the pulpit?”

“I trust in Christ for the fitness, sir.”

“Then you shall go now, and we’ll see.”

This conversation took place in my vestry one Sabbath afternoon in 1866. It was a time of weariness. As languid and disheartened I rehearsed my sermon in preparation for the afternoon service, I seemed to have no message for my people. It was a weary time in the Church. The pulse was low. Praying was dull. There was little power with the Word. There were few conversions. Workers were despondent; the love of some was waxing cold; and not a few of the saints were in sore conflict, some indeed on the borders of despair. But a little band of heroic spirits were on the watch-tower, offering unceasing prayer to God for a time of

gracious reviving. Chief among these was Isabella, who was crying to Heaven night and day for better things both for herself and the work. The answer came ; but it was in a manner not anticipated, and for her it was "by terrible things in righteousness." The mission work, on which her heart was set, became a total wreck through divisive courses followed by some ; and her own faith had almost perished in a deep valley of soul-conflict and trial.

It was near the hour of public worship, when a young man, an entire stranger, was introduced to me as an evangelistic worker, ready for service. When I looked at the little man and observed his boyish face, when I learned that only the other day he had been a player in a regimental band—that ancient judge, my Lord Prejudice, mounted the bench with eager step, and as is his wont passed sentence without hearing the case. Hence my rude, ungenerous questions. His answers, however, were given with so much wisdom and meekness that I said to myself, "This is, perhaps, the lad with the five barley loaves and two small fishes : it may be this is what we have been praying for." So I put the lad into my pulpit.

His opening prayer was in great power ; his address was in demonstration of the Spirit ; it was clear, God was with the young evangelist. Sinners were awakened and converted. Slumbering saints were aroused. Despairing souls rose into liberty and joy. Workers were strengthened with all might in the inner man. The whole congregation was moved ; and a genuine work of grace began. Night after night the large building was crowded to excess. Mr. D., the evangelist, increased in power ; on some occasions the vast congregation was dissolved in tears ; and at the close of

every meeting scores of persons of all ages were found with the eager question on their lips or on their faces, "What must we do to be saved?" Soon the movement passed beyond the limits of the congregation, and many hundreds in the town were added to the Lord.

Of many striking incidents in the work I shall here record only one. At the close of a meeting some ten or twelve persons were assembled in the Session House in deepest distress of soul, weeping and praying, but finding no relief. A last word was spoken, when suddenly the Holy Ghost fell upon them and the whole company of inquirers simultaneously believed and broke out into loud and joyful praise. An equal number of anxious persons occupied another apartment, the vestry. Curious to see how it fared with them I entered the room; and to my amazement found that they also without one word spoken to them, without knowing what had taken place in the other apartment, had suddenly and at the same instant of time passed from anguish and tears to peace, joy, and praise. Among all these I never knew of one backslider.

The deliverances vouchsafed to afflicted saints at this time were a marked feature of the work. It seemed as if the powers of darkness had been making a combined onset upon believers. Perhaps the great Adversary, seeing signs of a better time, had been laying out his forces to counterwork and prevent it. But now the tide of victory had turned for the struggling soldiers of Christ. Of these no one had a more remarkable experience than Isabella Macpherson.

For more than a year she had been passing through an ordeal of fire. Without going into the world, she had been

made to feel the potency of its spell. The fascinations of life were presented to her in a tempting guise. An honourable engagement held out to her the prospect of affluence and happiness in married life. But finding that the new relationship would entangle her in some of the world's lesser frivolities, in loyalty to conscience and to Christ she refused to comply. She needed not to give up her religion; she might continue to be the devout worshipper, the earnest patron of good work, the friend of the poor. She needed only to moderate her zeal; to cease from the narrowness of the puritan; to conform to the usages of cultured society; and enjoy the innocent pleasures of this world—without sacrificing the hope of a better world to come. To plausible arguments and powerful inducements were added the insinuating influences of friends, and most of all the entanglements of affection, a force all but irresistible in a nature so susceptible and tender as hers. It was a severe ordeal, an almost mortal struggle: but grace triumphed. She would not yield her convictions by a hair-breadth's conformity to the world; she would not cast even one pinch of incense on the world's altar; she would not once bow in the house of Rimmon. After a long struggle she tore herself away from the tender attachment of years, from the society of friends of long standing, from much that the human heart holds dear. It cost her shattered health and a broken heart; but she kept a good conscience, maintained her loyalty to Christ, and sacrificing the world for God won a great victory.

This passage in her life was a real Valley of Humiliation. In the course of the trial she was led to subject herself to severe self-examination. Dissatisfied with her religion, she

set before herself a loftier ideal. A long period of introspection and soul exercise followed. The balance of the sanctuary was now never out of her hand: every thought, feeling, and motive, every movement of her spirit, as well as every word and deed, were weighed with the light of God's Judgment-seat falling with burning vividness on the scales. Too much "looking in" tends to legal bondage; while too much "looking out" leads to Antinomian license. To hold the balance even between searching the soul and trusting in Christ is true wisdom. Amidst the incessant activities of the present day there is need of more self-examination, a deeper soul-study. If the habit of piercing introspection is an infirmity, it is the infirmity of the noblest souls: and often in this way it is that the Holy Spirit trains the worker for highest service.

This, to Isabella, was the hottest part of the furnace. She had summoned herself into her own presence, and sat in stern judgment on her soul. Night and day she invoked the inspection of Divine Holiness, watching, and praying: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting." She questioned herself in everything, and questioned everything in herself. All was defective; all was unworthy; all was tainted with sin. Her prayers, her praises, her labours, her sacrifices—all were condemned; in the burning rays of the light the Holy Spirit was now pouring into her soul she could only exclaim, "Woe is me! I am undone!" And the more eagerly she pursued her high ideal, the more it eluded her grasp; the higher she rose, the higher rose the standard also. Was she in Christ, she asked herself a hundred

times ; and a hundred times answered her own question by declaring as before the Holy One that all the evidence was against her. Her anguish of mind was now unutterable, and the Adversary frequently assailed the foundations of her faith.

At length deliverance came. One night, after long watching and praying, the Lord suddenly revealed Himself to her in a gracious and surprising way. So vivid was her sense of His presence, that she seemed to see rather than believe. It was as if she spoke to Him face to face. So overpowered was she with the light that shone into her soul, that she wondered whether she were awake or in a trance. Absorbed in a blissful vision of the Redeemer's glory, she wholly forgot her own care and needs, and was swallowed up in the admiration of His matchless grace and beauty. All her trouble was gone, like the darkness of night before the dawning of a fair summer morning. Her peace flowed like a river. She could as soon have doubted her own existence as have doubted the Saviour's love. Her soul was bathed in light ; a flood of holiness filled her entire being. Her sense of deliverance from sin was so complete, and her dread of even the possibility of its least breath ever again tainting her spirit was so intense, that she begged the Lord to take her home, crying out, “Let me die ! let me die !” She would rather die than sin. Like Peter, she wished to build tabernacles on the mount, and scarce knew the full meaning of her own prayer.

“Oh, is there not a mansion in glory for me !” she exclaimed. “There is a mansion for you,” the Lord seemed to reply, “but it is not yet ready ; as soon as it is prepared, I will take you home.” As she looked up, she

thought she saw a mansion all but finished; and she was overjoyed at the thought of so early a departure to be with Him to whom she owed so much. This impression of the nearly-finished mansion remained with her for life; it seemed to keep her watching and working; and although the vision tarried for twenty-one years, it was only the Lord's "little while." The joy, the glory of that night never faded from her soul. The experience was so wrought into her innermost being that it moulded her character and life, giving a touch of heavenly beauty and a tone of rare sweetness to her whole subsequent career. The outcome of this passage in her life was clear and rich. The furnace had been hot; but the refined metal bore the stamp of the King's mint. In that wilderness she had picked up many a precious stone. The very sands of the desert were transmuted into gold when the new sun rose upon her. From that bitter sowing she gathered a harvest of wisdom and experience, which made her a guide and a benefactress to many. The impulse heavenward never lost its force; she went forward, nor did she once halt till she reached the goal.

Henceforth the supreme object of her faith was the living personal Redeemer, whom she constantly spoke of as "Our Saviour." Redemption by the blood of Christ was more than ever her glory and her joy. The fulness and clearness with which she could set forth justification by faith alone, was her special gift. The work of the Holy Spirit in the soul was an outstanding reality: she insisted upon thoroughness in conversion, and on out-and-out separation from the world. Thoroughly weaned from all trust in feelings and frames, she now went simply

and solely by the Word of God. Her year of humiliation and conflict made prayer a leading habit of her life, her chief resource, and an almost uninterrupted exercise. A deep sense of unworthiness and a dread of sin was a characteristic. Her happiness was simply joy in the Lord; and she never lost the roll of her assurance again. Very tender was her sympathy with Christians in trial; her heart bled for sinners; and, during her life, after this ordeal, she enjoyed unbroken success in winning souls.

On the hilltop, watching for the morning, Isabella was the first to catch the dawn of the gracious visitation. Her long night past, her weary vigil now changed into joy and song, she threw herself into the work of guiding the seekers for God; a work for which her recent bitter experiences, soul conflicts, and happy deliverance, pre-eminently qualified her. To the forlorn wanderer searching for the way of life she could always say: “I know *where* you are: *I* have been there too.”

The effect of this movement in the congregation upon our Mission work was immediate and striking. The new fire was not a crackling blaze; it was fire that could be carried and used to kindle other fires. From this point the Mission took a fresh departure. Difficulties hitherto insuperable were speedily overcome; disasters caused by sinister influences were repaired; some of the most notorious sinners in the district were converted; and very soon our Mission Church rose in life and beauty, like the Phoenix, from its own ashes. In this work the lion’s share, both of the labour and the blessing, fell to the subject of our memoir.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Bolted Door, and How it was Opened.

HOW long shall I keep going to a house where they will not let me in?" inquires a young visitor.

"As long as the house stands or your feet will carry you to it," is Isabella's answer.

That was her own practice. She went again, and again, and again, to the same bolted door; knocked, apologized, entreated, and sometimes even said to the angry housewife, "If I should come to your door by mistake, I hope you won't be angry." This lowly gentleness was the key by which she opened many a door after weary months of unsuccessful visiting. Driven away with imprecations and threatenings, she renewed the attack again and again until courage and patience, the big guns of her battery, made a breach, and the house was captured.

Several years were spent by her in visiting and evangelizing Hadden's land, a long range of three-storied houses, old, dingy and squalid—a huge Black Hole with inhabitants to match. Here in those days dwelt the rowdy, the drunkard, the prostitute, the thief, the blasphemer, the atheist, the general "ne'er do weel"—a desperate crew, with a mixture of a better sort, though very poor. Here drunkenness and revelry reigned every Saturday night; the ground-swell of the sin storm lasting usually till Monday. Now and again for a whole week or longer the entire

community—with the exception of a few quiet decent creatures, some of whom indulged in laudanum as their only solace—went utterly mad with drink and rioting, the revel coming to a close only when the last stick of furniture and the last rag of clothes were pawned.

Isabella visited every house—in other words, almost every room in the block—once or twice a week, sometimes oftener; kindly received by some, fiercely rejected by others. Frequently her approach was the signal for locking the door, and absolute silence; the only response to her pleading for admission was the plain intimation that she was not wanted. At one time she is rudely told to go away and never return; at another time her tracts are handed back or flung in her face, or torn to shreds before her eyes. Disgusting language was sometimes used on purpose doubtless to drive her from the door for ever. Several times her life was threatened, knives were brandished in her face, and she was forced to run for safety. So debased was the locality, so lawless were the inhabitants, that for years I dared not enter Hadden’s land except under the wing of the lady visitor. Once when passing that way in broad daylight and in the open street, I was knocked down by a blow on the head dealt me from behind by an Irish navvy, one of the choice spirits of the place. In the face of shocking spectacles, drunken orgies, brutal fights, infamous villainies, our visitor held on her way until by the grace of God Hadden’s land was laid at her feet.

One room was occupied by Peter ——, an old soldier, and his family. This man, drunken, fierce, a sworn enemy to all religion, sternly refused our visitor admission to his house. For a period of some two years she knocked at

the door at least once, sometimes twice, every week, without success. Frequently the door was slammed in her face with such a volley of oaths as only an old blackguard soldier can command. Sometimes she opened the door stealthily, and thrust in her foot between the door and door-post to keep it open; the squeezed and endangered limb thus keeping a chink clear for a little special pleading. In this way a kind word was spoken; a tract handed in; and a slight opening made for friendly intercourse with the wife and children. Peter himself was often furious, and threatened to take the visitor's life if she dared show face there again; and more than once chased her out of the house with an open knife in his hand, swearing by all his gods that he would never be happy until he saw her dead. Dreading the worst, Isabella's friends endeavoured to dissuade her from perilling her life, but in vain; she still faced the forlorn hope. Many a time she went up the stairs trembling and praying on every step; many a time when she knocked at that door her heart knocked loudly in her breast, and more loudly still she knocked at heaven's gate for help. At length she was admitted: Peter's wife became friendly; his children loved the visitor; himself, though often fierce and always sulky, grew more tolerant; and a ray of hope fell athwart that miserable home.

Peter had his seasons of comparative temperance, which invariably closed with a wild round of drunkenness. This meant that he went on drinking until neither chair nor blanket was left in the house. On one occasion our visitor met him with a table on his head: he was on the way to *drink* it! Next day she met him carrying away the grate, which he laughingly said he was going to "melt." Wife

and children had fled. Venturing to call, Isabella found the wretched man lying on the bare boards, starving into sobriety. He begged for shoes.

“Ye see, Miss Eesabell,” he said, “I waukened awfu’ cauld in the nicht; an’ it’s no a good job to be without claes in the winter, and I saw a wee peekie o’ fire on the stanes” (here he winced under the visitor’s glance, which suggested thoughts of the vanished grate), “and I got up and put twa lumps o’ coal on the fire, as I thocht; but when I rose in the mornin’ I got the remains o’ my boots amon’ the ashes. Ye see, I had mista’en my boots for lumps o’ coal.”

There, among the ashes, were the two shining iron heels and fragments of leather; at the sight of which Isabella laughed outright, the old warrior, despite his misery, joining in the laughter. Words of chiding followed—and boots also. Peter was set a-going again; wife and children returned; grate and table and bedclothes were procured, bit by bit; and a gleam of better things to come was felt.

The old clothes department is indispensable in Home Mission work. Look into the room, and if you did not know you were in a minister’s house, you would think you were in a pawn-shop. What a collection of things old and curious!—men’s, women’s, and children’s apparel in all stages of dissolution and decay; hats, caps, bonnets, shoes, shawls, blankets; things of marvellous shape and remote antiquity; rags of gentility, once the glory of their wearers; things wearable, indicating the more generous donor; things past mending, the gifts of the miserly; a chaotic mass, needing a creative genius to evoke order and to fashion into use. It needs much wisdom to administer

such Home Mission grants. By a judicious use of old clothes, Isabella succeeded in saving whole families from utter wreck. An old suit became a choice means of grace; a cast-off coat or gown inspired the grateful wearer with a desire for the garments of salvation. From the sublimities of the spiritual down to old clothes may seem a great descent; but the mingling of the heavenly and the earthly in this way is a fine discipline. After all, rags and religion are well met, sinners and grace are fitly matched.

For long Isabella failed to induce Peter to attend the meeting in Hadden's land. At length he was caught in this way. He had been making excuses and lying promises as usual, bidding her go, and he would follow, when she said:—

“I'll wait for you.”

“Well, if you are not ashamed to walk down the street in my company, I'll go to the meeting.” This he said, fully believing she would not consent to accompany him.

“Oh yes, Peter, I'll go down the street with you.”

“But I have na a coat to put on; you surely would na like to be seen wi' a ragged chiel like me?”

“Just you come away, and you will see.”

To his astonishment she went with him; and when at last he would have drawn back, she appealed to his sense of honour as an old soldier, and thus succeeded in getting him to attend the meeting. From this time the influence of Isabella was established in his family, and in a remarkable degree over himself. He began to attend the church, and to encourage his wife and children in a similar course. But he had many a fall through strong drink. On one occasion, after a long bout of drinking, he fell into despair,

and resolved to commit suicide. This terrible purpose would have been effected but for the timely intervention of our visitor. Abandoned by every one, seemingly given over by God, he was about to launch himself into eternity, when she providentially discovered the desperate project. By her bold, commanding bearing he was arrested in the very nick of time. After an intense effort of mingled pleading and remonstrance, a struggle, in which her courage, tact, and patience were strained to the uttermost, the self-willed rebel gave way. Bursting into tears, he delivered up to Isabella the rope with which he was to have ended his miserable life, and promised to abandon his evil design. To her intrepidity and compassion he owes his life, as he often says; and he thinks he was saved from that crime that he might be saved from all sin. But intemperance has continued to be his sin and snare; and although there are not wanting signs of penitence, evidence of saving grace is not yet clear. His wife and family, however, were happily recovered, and admitted into the fellowship of the Church: nor have they ceased ever since to do well.

Sinners of this class often fall even when grace has begun a work of recovery. Like infants, they are only learning to walk. The worker should not despair. The memory of a few weeks, or even days, of a happy, sober life, is often the magnet to draw them back. The recollection of that sunny gleam amidst the darkness sometimes prevents the final, fatal plunge. In restoring those hapless ones much wisdom and patience are needed. A chilling word may send them to destruction: love unwearied alone can heal them. I here recal an instance.

In the revival of 1866, described in the last chapter, a

man notorious in the district for drunkenness and profanity was suddenly converted. From beating his godly wife and dragging her about the room by the hair of her head whenever he found her on her knees, he became her loving companion in piety and every good work. He joined the fellowship of the Church, and for two years continued steadfast, until one Saturday night, when he was tempted by drink and fell. Next day was a sorrowful Sabbath to his friends. Having taken counsel together, his Christian comrades met in their fallen brother's room in the evening, and spent the night in prayer, continuing on their knees until five o'clock on Monday morning. The man was restored; and ever since has lived in harmony with his profession, filling an honourable position both in the Church and the world.

Hadden's land was subsiding into decent tranquillity; rays of hope were beginning to gild the horizon of its troubled life. After a long season of heroic labour, Isabella and her fellow-workers began to be in good heart. Prayer was being answered: the first-fruits of harvest seemed to be within their grasp. Unexpectedly a storm of sin swept over the place. Drink was again in power, with all its attendant horrors—mad rioting, impurity, defiance of God and man, and all the elements of high pandemonium. At first Isabella, ever on the watch, strove to check the rising spirit of diabolical hilarity and license: but in vain—it was only speaking to the winds. At length the hell storm spent itself, leaving unsightly wrecks of humanity and home to tell the tale. On entering Hadden's land one day, she found the women huddled together in utter shameless nakedness, only one

of them having retained clothing enough to enable her to carry everything that would sell to the pawn-shop and fetch the drink. The furniture is gone. The children are running about naked and crying for bread. The women are semi-delirious, weeping, singing, or roaring for more drink. Some are blaspheming, while others are cursing their husbands and all men, or belching out hideously foul language. Most are without any clothes, and the rest indecently clad. Thus the little ones receive their baptism of mingled beastliness and devilry.

Isabella stood aghast at the sight: it was too much, she broke down and wept. Waving her hand, she commanded silence, while, with choking utterance, she cried: "Oh dear! dear! Shame! shame! What shall I do? God help us! God have mercy on us!" Then the whole company burst into crying, howling, yelling, and beseeching help. Hastening home, her countenance pale as death, she lost no time in collecting castaway clothes of some sort, and, with incredible celerity, she succeeded in restoring the entire community to decency. This passage in her life-work she never could refer to without visible signs of distress. She never could tell, she said, more than the half. But the victory in Hadden's land was won: after this her influence was paramount.

"Oh, she's a richt Christian, Miss Eesabell is!" one would say.

"Ay, she's a brave lass!" adds another; "she's nane o' your stooka dames; she's a real lady! Guid bless her! Eesabell's a blessin' tae's a'!"

CHAPTER IX.

Pearls in Dunghills.



AFTER years of patient toil, Hadden's land became the scene of a religious awakening. The work of grace in 1866 quickly spread from our church to the mission district. Isabella, fired with new zeal, led the way. In a room in a corner of the block a weekly meeting for the worship of God and the proclamation of the Gospel was set a-going. Here, as many of the people as the visitors could "compel to come in" were gathered together; and here the first piercing cry for mercy was heard. The first convert was the most abandoned woman of the place; and she was converted through this humble meeting, but without attending it.

Helen Sharp, a vile, hopeless profligate, was one night a-missing. Her sister, accompanied by another woman, went out into the wilderness of lanes, courts, and slums, in search of this wretched fragment of flesh and blood—scarce worth an hour's honest toil, as some would have thought—but nowhere in any of her haunts could she be found. At length, in the middle of the night, she was found in a gutter, prostrate, speechless, all but dead. The pitiful wreck of dishonoured humanity was borne home and laid upon her sister's bed, for she had no bed of her own. As she lay there, she was compelled for the first time to

listen to the voice of prayer and praise, and the simple story of redemption through the blood of Christ, the little homely meeting being held in an adjoining room. Helen Sharp was deeply moved by what she heard. Our chief visitor, Isabella, took occasion of her agitation to "make friends" with her, and to unfold the plan of salvation. A week passed; Helen's convictions deepened; the sweet sounds of the Gospel in the other room raised her feelings of anxiety to the highest pitch. At the close of the service, our visitor again dealt with her. Prayer was offered, counsel given, and, in the course of the conversation, light from heaven dawned upon the benighted wanderer.

"I have found the Saviour!" she suddenly exclaimed.

Throwing her arms around Isabella's neck, she warmly embraced her, and broke out in loud praise of her newly-found Saviour. A more striking personal change could not be imagined: it was from the deepest darkness to the clearest light; from the lowest depths of vice to a life so saintly that only those who knew the woman in her two lives could give full credence to it. She became the companion of the godly; the teacher of young converts; the guide of inquirers—a rare specimen of grace. Her insight into the Word of God was profound. Possessing a quick intellect and ready wit, she depicted her experiences—the comings and goings of the Lord in His dealings with her soul, and the surpassing love of Christ to her, the chief of sinners—in a style of her own, quaint, graphic, and inspiring. Her faith, zeal, originality, naturalness, and wit, formed a character unique, picturesque, and powerful. Soon she found a home of her own, which became the trysting-place of all earnest souls: even the older Christians

loved to sit at the feet of one so manifestly the child of grace. It was the old story over again—the woman of the city at the feet of the Lord; the alabaster box of precious ointment; the memorable scene of penitence and love.

When she was admitted into the fellowship of the Church, it fell to me to catechize her. In the course of conversation I asked, “In those wild days of yours, Helen, were you happy?”

“Perfectly miserable, sir. Burnin’ coals in my breast a’ the time.”

“What did you do to get rid of your misery?”

“I just made good resolutions, sir: I kent nae better.”

“You tried to turn over a new leaf?”

“A new leaf! Oh yes; I’m sure I turned o’er as mony new leaves as wauld mak’ the biggest book in the world; and bonny leaves they were, ilka ane was blacker than anither.”

“Your resolutions did not stand?”

“Oh, hoo could the resolutions o’ a sinner like me stand? They were like rotten tow in a blazin’ fire. It was a case o’ tryin’ to cheat the devil wi’ his ain cheatery siller.”

“Did you never pray for help?”

“I could na’ pray, I dursna pray; but I gart (made) my wee lassie pray a little prayer she had learnt somehow. But when I cam’ hame the worse o’ drink the poor bairn would look in my face wi’ an awfu’ sad look, and say, ‘Mither, we winna say our prayerie the night,’ I kent what that meant; and it gaed like a knife to my heart till I could bear it nae mair.”

“What did you do then?”

“Oh well, sir, one day I took this bit o’ a Bible,” (here

she showed me a boardless fragment of the Scriptures which had been the silent witness of her evil life), "and I laid my hand on it and swore a terrible oath that I would never taste drink again."

"How did you get on after that?"

"Ah, sir!" replied Helen in a deep undertone, "that nicht was the worst nicht of a'."

"What! did you violate your oath?"

"Oh yes, sir; I gaed through it like mad: it was nae better than a pickle caff (chaff) in a storm o' wind. A hunner oaths would ha'e been a' the same."

"How did you feel then?"

"I felt I had sold mysel' clean into the hands o' the devil, and was lost a'thegether. Oh, if ever I was near"—

Here she paused, deeply moved.

"How did you do after that?"

"Oh, sir," replied Helen with a voice full of dignity and feeling, "I jist cam' to Christ, drink an' a'; and the first taste I got o' His love in the pardon o' my sins, the likin' for the drink gaed clean awa' and never cam' back."

Here pausing she wept softly awhile, and then broke out in praise. She never afterwards tasted strong drink. Again and again when she fainted at her work, and also when she was laid aside in her last illness, she sternly refused the stimulants offered her by unwise friends. She had drunk of the strong drink which maketh strong: she was filled with the Spirit. Throughout the years of her Christian course not a speck of inconsistency ever defiled the snowy purity of her life. Forgiven much, she loved much. In her happiest hours she never lost sight of her sin: the habitual sense of her vileness was the large vessel

into which the Lord constantly poured the fulness of His blessing. Many saw this and admired the riches of divine grace.

Her conversion was like the sounding of a trumpet at midnight. "Hadden's land" was awakened. Was Helen Sharp saved? Then nothing was impossible: nobody need despair. The meetings were suddenly crowded: drunkards, fallen women, infidels, blasphemers, and the devil's cast-aways in general, were at the feet of the workers, crying, "What must we do to be saved?"

M —, the father of a family in Hadden's land, was an infidel. Coming under the sweep of this awakening, he opened his house to the visitor, and granted full permission to his family to fall in with the new order of things, though he did not himself venture on a confession of faith. To obtain a footing in his miserable home and win his boys was a victory. His sons with certain other lads were drawn into the gospel net. First of all they were taken to our house to be clothed, and then to be instructed. What a spectacle these lads and boys presented! To say that they were in rags is wholly inadequate. The mass of tatters in which the infidel's sons appeared was tied together and suspended on their bodies by means of slender cords; and one trembled lest the feeble cordage should give way and the entire collection of rags fall to the ground. Decently clad, the lads became docile and sprightly. Our kitchen became their infant school; their divinity hall; their place of rendezvous. Here they learned their first lessons in manners, in speech, in religion. Who was God? They did not know. They had often heard the name, in profane swearing of course; but who or what God is they could not

tell. The name of Christ they had never once heard. But kindness had opened their hearts; a thirst for knowledge was created in them; and they proved to be apt scholars. They are now, some of them, in decent homes of their own, all of them respectable members of the Church and society: good fruit reaped from a very unpromising field.

Let us visit this dingy close in another part of the district. A few dirty, wretchedly-clad children are playing in the gutters, seemingly happy. Marvellous is the elasticity of childhood, its power of enjoyment, its capacity for making happiness out of a trifle and of untoward material, of finding joy amidst scenes of misery! Is not this clear evidence of the Divine goodness? It is plainly the will of the Beneficent Creator that man's first experience of life should be happiness. If an infant could reason and speak, would it not say, "What a happy world is this! How kind to me is everybody; what lots of good things and sweet things there are here! Surely He who sent me into this world is Himself good!" So God in His bountifulness would be beforehand with the devil. Alas! how little of this falls to the lot of children in the slums! God's method is reversed: misery, misery, misery—from the first sensations of life onward, and still more misery. Here, not God, but the devil, is first. To be good or wise in nakedness, cold, hunger, foul air, and a moral atmosphere more foul—is more than human. In such depths of filth it may be questioned whether an angel could keep his purity unsullied. Pity those little children who at the very threshold of life know more of its bitterness and woe than thousands do in all their threescore years and ten!

The court is very dark, for the windows are poorly lighted; the inhabitants in many cases being unable to afford gas. They pay so heavily for the blazing lights in the publican's, that in their own houses they must content themselves with a dim lamp or no light at all. One block of buildings in our district is called "Candle land," because there is no gas-light in it: the tenants are not trusted with gas because they would never pay for it. Now, take a step down into this cellar, minding well your feet and head. The hovel is dark; but your eyes getting used to the dimness you begin to see where you are.

"Take a seat." Where? There is neither chair nor stool. The only seats are holes scooped out of the earthen floor in a semi-circle round the hearth. In these dirty holes we have seen the father and mother sitting drunk, smoking or sleeping; in their absence we have been startled by the children suddenly emerging from the depths where they burrow and grovel. In slight contrast to those primitive sofas and couches, a few boards in a corner with bits of ragged dirty sacking serve for a bed, where parents and children are supposed to sleep; at least, on those nights when the normal drunkenness is not followed by quarrelling and violence. But what is that moving about in the darker corners, or slipping out and in by the dingy portal? These are the children, as naked as when they were born.

"Children, why don't you put on your clothes?"

"We canna," replies the eldest; "Mither has popped them, and we maun be dooin' till father gets siller to buy them oot."

When? Ah! nobody can tell. Is this old Scotland? No, it is new Scotland, with its enormous wealth far

exceeding the dreams of our hardy, moneyless ancestors ; with its great cities, its grand civilization, its west-ends and east-ends, its society and its slums.

These drunken parents, after much labour and patience on the part of our visitor, are induced to attend a meeting. They appear at the service under the influence of drink. Advised to retire they positively refuse : they are anxious, they say, to be saved. This seems to be impossible ; and yet at the end of the meeting, they wait to be counselled and warned. They return again and again. The desire to mend their ways deepens into conviction of sin, and convictions are followed by confessions, tears, prayers, and songs of deliverance. They are saved ; and grace is once more triumphant. In a short time they make for themselves a new home, where sobriety and decency prevail ; peace and comfort abound ; and above all the fear of God bears sway. The father and mother become members of the Mission Church, patterns of humble, consistent Christian life. Thus a whole family is redeemed from destruction. To see yon cellar and then this well-furnished, happy home, one may well exclaim, “What hath God wrought !”

Much remains to be done in the better housing of the poor and their social amelioration in many ways. But it must not be overlooked that in this work the main thing is the regeneration of the individual. So debased are the habits of many in our city slums, that in six months they would turn a palace into a pig-stye. On the other hand, divine grace makes the house as well as the man a new creation : where Christ dwells even poverty smiles.

CHAPTER X.

Trials and Triumphs.

PULLING down old houses, storied high, curiously pinnacled and tottering to the fall, is not pleasant work. It means clouds of dust, mountains of rubbish, and not a little danger. One stone dislodged may dislodge a dozen more, threatening to bury you in the ruin. This is Home Mission work. In ordinary church work you build on the chosen site, far from the quarry. Here you build in your quarry; you quarry in your building. The dust, the noise, the danger, the failures and despairs, are such as would kill outright the Christianity that thrives only in cushioned pews and on Brussels carpets. Here you must touch human nature in its tenderest parts; you must finger its foulest sores; you must deal with its most devilish tempers and beastly ways. This is the work that sweet-natured, finely-tempered, heroic souls, like the subject of this memoir, are best fitted to accomplish.

In this Christ-like enterprise the first and foremost thing, the noblest and most necessary service, is the work of the visitor. The visitor is the pioneer of the Mission, the chief evangelist. It is hers to go down into the depths: she searches, she digs, she quarries, she lays foundations. If she succeeds, the work prospers; if she fails, all else is in vain.

Gentle lady, would you be a visitor, a messenger of Christ, to tell the slums that Christ died for the slums? Can you shake hands with the drunkard? Can you play the part of a loving sister to the vilest of women? Can you carry comforts to the fierce Amazon, who to quench your zeal one day emptied a bucket of dirty water on your head? Can you be the generous patron of the ruffian who spat on you and called you by the most loathsome of names? Can you kneel beside the vomit of the beastly sot, and pray for his dying wife, as she breathes out the last sighs of a broken heart, amidst the sounds of her husband's brutality and cursing? Can you bear the smells of fever and small-pox, aggravated by the odour of perpetual dirt? Can you behold a swarm of disgusting insects and not sicken? Can you bear to be sickened a hundred times, and yet always return to the work? How will you feel when on your return from visiting you discover something that renders necessary the casting of your dress in whole or in part into the flames? To the three genteel sisters who picked your pocket while you knelt with them at the throne of grace, what will you say next time they ask you to lead their devotions, because they "so enjoyed your beautiful prayer"? Can you catch with guile the sinner who all the time is trying with infinite cunning to sell you? Can you argue with the man that laughs at the idea of a God? Can you answer the "anxious inquirer," who, amidst roars of laughter, desires to know if he will get ham and eggs for breakfast in heaven? What will you say to the mocker who maintains that "the devil is a finer fellow than God"? How will you meet the ribald deist who says he believes in a God, only his God is "a

different chap" from yours? Have you a message for the man who declares he will rather go down to hell than dwell in heaven with the God of the Bible? Can you endure foul speeches, blasphemies, cruel mockeries, imposition, a thousand vexations and discomfitures? Can you go on all the same pitying and loving the vilest and most reprobate of them all? Can you face the poverty, always in itself sad enough, often darkened by despair and attended by ferocious defiance of God and man? Society is sleeping; the Church is playing at missions; the devil is stirring his cauldron of hell broth; and good people, getting a sniff of the infernal stuff, stop their noses and hurry away to church, or home to dinner: and what can *you* do?

Visiting, to be effective, is not a mere call, a kind inquiry, the handing in of a tract, an invitation to the meeting. First of all, you make your way into a house where you know you are not wanted. To get in, you must so knock as to create the ear to hear *your* knock. By acts of kindness you succeed in establishing yourself in the house, not as patron or visitor, but as acquaintance and friend. Gradually you open out your budget of benevolence, and this needs much wisdom, both as to what you show and what you conceal. You must learn to duck your head when great breakers of prejudice and vulgar passion burst upon you. Unless you acquire the fine art of winking at ugly things, you had better go at once, and return no more. What is to be done with that crew of squalid, half-fed, wholly ill-bred children, who handle your dress with the stickiest of fingers? Can you do anything for the sickly, bloodless woman, without giving offence to the brutal husband who is the real cause of her ill-health?

How can you conciliate the coarse man without awakening suspicions of your ulterior spiritual aims? You are in a lion's den all the time. You are constantly apologizing for your presence; and although you are compelled sometimes to take the hint and go, you must be thick-skinned enough to be always coming back.

At length you have got the whole house on your shoulders; and, herculean though the task be, you have hopes of carrying it through. Suddenly a storm of sin sweeps over the family; the whole fabric of your year's toil topples and falls; you have been building castles in the air; you are at your wits' end. What are you to do? Despair? No! You have only wakened the devil, and that is preliminary. Whole Churches are dying because there is not power enough in the preacher to waken the devil, and so set that battle in array without which true Christianity wins no victory, makes no advance. You have been trying to soar on a feather: wait on God for a wing! Get your commission renewed, and hear the Master say: "You go for Me to the slums; you go there to love and to suffer; you go to knock at the gates of hell and call forth My captives. Go, carry My message, bear all things for Me; when they curse, bless; when they hate, love; when they injure, forgive. Say I sent you; be content: leave the rest to Me."

Let no worker in the slums despair. Here are some instances of what grace can do in raising to virtue the vilest of the vile.

E——, a native of Aberdeen, was brought up in a pious family and under the ministry of that famous soldier of the cross, Dr. Kidd. In early womanhood she became a

member of the Church and a Sabbath-school teacher. Well married, she settled down in a happy home of her own. In the course of years she became a drunkard; sank into the lowest depths of immorality; broke her husband's heart; ruined his business; destroyed her home; and became an outcast and a wanderer. Coming to Dundee, she here continued her career of vice. Many a time our visitors came across her path and sought her recovery. Once when suffering pangs of remorse, she was induced to attend church. Refusing to enter, she took her seat on the gallery stair. The text that day was Zech. ix. 12: "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope!" Deeply impressed, she began to amend, but soon relapsed into her former ways. Dissolute conduct led to crime, and she was lodged in prison. Here, in her despair, she conceived the project of taking away her own life. Her ingenuity found means for committing suicide by tying articles of dress, torn and wrought into the form of a rope, to the iron grating of the window. Just as she was about to launch herself into eternity, she heard a voice crying: "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoner of hope!" She looked around to see who had entered the cell. There was no one. It was only the echo of her own memory or imagination; but it was the Word of God, and doubtless the Holy Spirit was in it. She paused, and wept. Her heart was strangely softened; she threw herself on the floor, and cried for mercy. The cry was heard; mercy came; a sense of forgiveness filled her heart; and she left the prison "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

The rest of her life was a commentary on the fifty-first Psalm. By the honest labour of her hands she soon made

for herself a little comfortable home. In her room little meetings for the worship of God, reading the Word, and exhortation were held. Her early training stood her in good stead; she possessed an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, and could talk sweetly of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. She walked softly. Dearly as she loved the house of God and the fellowship of His people, she always shrank from taking her place at the table of the Lord. For this we may blame her; but the overwhelming sense of her unworthiness, especially of her sin in abusing that sacred ordinance in her early days, was ever present with her. Nevertheless, she was happy in the Lord; and in lowly, loving admiration of His wondrous grace, sat at His feet until He called her home.

Jamie D., a lad of fifteen, was a reader of the vilest fiction, a reckless youth, a hater of God's house and all good. One evening he was induced to attend a revival meeting and was impressed. Conviction of sin seized him; quickly the evil books were put away, the Bible took their place, and Jamie became an earnest seeker of the Lord. By and by the glad message of the gospel entered his heart and he rejoiced. One of his first steps in the new way was to seek the conversion of his brother.

“Come to the meetin', Johnnie!”

“Na, na, nae meetin' for me, Jamie.”

“Man, Johnnie, ye've nae idea hoo happy ye would be if ye got Christ.”

“Pooh! Jamie, it's a' nonsense.”

“Ye micht come tae the meetin' for ance.”

“No, I winna,” said Johnnie, tartly.

“Man, Johnnie, I’ll gae you this saxpence if ye’ll come.”

Jamie had received the sixpence from his master for extra good service. The little bit of silver was tempting; Johnnie took it, went to the meeting—but did not come to Christ.

Jamie held on his own happy way. Not long was he in Christ when severe illness laid him low, and he was thought to be dying. Earnestly he prayed for recovery. “If the Lord spare me,” he said, “I will serve Him upon my knees.” His prayer was heard, and he was spared to serve God upon his knees in a manner wholly unexpected. From the peculiar nature of his disease he could not lie down; and most of his time was spent sitting on his knees. His sufferings were often excruciating; but he would say cheerfully, “My sufferings won’t merit heaven: no, only the Blood—the blood of Christ.” When promises of peace were quoted for his comfort, he said, “Beautiful promises! but the Blood, the Blood for me!” In his last hours, when suffering agonies of pain, he called his relatives to the bedside, and solemnly addressed each in turn. “O Johnnie, what will you do in the torments of hell when there will be no mother’s hand to soothe you?” To another, he said, “F., give up your drinking.”

“I do n’t drink much,” was the reply.

“You drink enough to keep you out of the kingdom of heaven,” said the dying boy.

“Give up your swearing.”

Oh, I do n’t often swear.”

“Ah! you swear enough to keep you from being saved.”

So Jamie delivered his dying testimony, and entered into rest.

An old man, who had been a church-goer all his days, was awakened from the sleep of self-righteousness in the last year of his life. The discovery of his state before God filled him with alarm. He sought and found salvation in Christ. When the visitor told him of one who affirmed that she had been saved from hell by a hair’s breadth, the old man said: “If you could split a hair into two parts, I may say I have been saved by *half a hair’s breadth*.” He filled up the remaining five months of his life with loud and joyful testimony to the grace of God—“Salvation by grace; all from first to last by grace.” And his impressive testimony was attended with the blessing of God.

A lad of sixteen lay dying, and was greatly afraid to die. He was visited, and the way of salvation explained to him. He was left to ponder this truth: Christ the Redeemer, and His death the ransom for sin and sinners. At the next visit the boy was found rejoicing: he was no longer afraid to die.

“What, not afraid to die!—how has that come about?”

“I’m going to heaven, and I need n’t be afraid to die.”

“Oh, indeed! you are going to heaven, are you? How is that?”

“Because,” replied the dying lad with a look of bright intelligence, “Christ has paid my way! Oh yes, I see it: Christ has paid my way.”

That is the marrow of the gospel as put in the old lines:

“Upon a life I did not live,
 Upon a death I did not die—
 Another’s life, another’s death,
 I stake my whole eternity.”

A truly pitiable object in the district was a leper, a sailor who had contracted that terrible malady in a Maltese hospital, where he had lain ill of dysentery. He suffered in hands and feet from the disease, and his whole body was emaciated. He had been in several hospitals, from which he was invariably discharged as incurable. He was driven from post to pillar: nobody cared to have anything to do with him. His own wife and children were cruel to him. This, at first, we did not comprehend; at length it dawned on us that they wished to drive him from the house. In this they succeeded. He was a quiet, inoffensive, tender-hearted man. Never while I live shall I forget the picture of abject, unutterable misery presented by that poor leper when last I saw him. We had done what we could for him, and he was deeply grateful.

“Sir,” he said, with choking utterance, “I do not mind the leprosy; it can only kill me, and I know I am a dying man: but to be cast off by my wife and children, this is a thousand times worse to bear. Yes, yes, I believe you, sir; though nobody will take me in, Jesus, the leper’s friend, will not cast me out. Still, it is very hard to be turned adrift by one’s own flesh and blood; I am dying of a broken heart, and believe me, sir, that is worse than leprosy.”

And so he died. The remembrance of that wretched, cast-off, broken-hearted leper dims my eyes as I write.

One Sabbath night in winter a little ragged, barefooted boy—a child of the slums—made his way to the door of the Mission School. The night was intensely cold; a chill wind with showers of hail swept the streets; everybody was within doors, and even the children of

the district were not to be seen. At such seasons the Mission schoolroom presents powerful attractions to the little waifs. The light streaming through the windows, the warm air coming out of the open door, the cheerful hum of voices, the singing of the hymns, the happiness of the children within—combine to make the school, in the eyes of the little ones starving of cold outside, a very paradise of delights. It is too cold and wet to play; there is no comfort at home; and to get their bare feet and shivering limbs warmed for an hour would be a little heaven on earth. That night quite a number of children seeking admission into the school had been refused, for the good reason that the room was already overcrowded. With sad hearts the shivering waifs went away back into the cold night, and with sadder hearts the teachers saw them depart. After these had been refused admission, this little fellow in his tatters and squalor knocked at the door and begged to be taken in; and somehow the person in charge of the door, without any sufficient reason, allowed him to enter. He could not read, he did not know even the letters of the alphabet; but he quickly learnt a few lines of a hymn from the lips of the teacher. He proved to be an eager scholar; and week after week he reappeared in the same rags, but with the same lively happy look. One night he brought with him a curious bundle of printed leaves: he said it was his own Bible. It consisted of portions of the sacred volume, the greater part being mere fragments and loose leaves, all tied together by a piece of rope. How had he come by it? Neighbours removing had thrown a quantity of chaff and other refuse into the street. In this heap of rubbish our

little scholar had espied the old book; and, having carefully gathered the fragments together, bound them up by the bit of rope found in the same heap, and carried the prize away. How did he know it was the Bible? He could not read; but the quick intelligence of the child somehow led him to the conclusion that it was God's book. Pressing it lovingly to his bosom with both hands, he said proudly to the teacher: "It's my own Bible." Night after night he returned, always fondly carrying his Bible with him.

One Sabbath evening he did not appear: for several weeks he was a-missing. The teacher sought for him, and found him in a wretched hovel, and in a dying state. There he lay on a bed of old jute bags, without a single visible comfort. On his rude pillow lay, near his head, his Bible, with its curious rope binding. He hailed his teacher with joy. "Teacher," he said, "I'm going to heaven; I'm going to Jesus!" From beneath his pillow he took out his Sabbath-school tickets, which he had carefully tied up in a rag, and said: "Take them back to the school, teacher; I won't need them, I'm going to Jesus!" With a thin, faltering voice he tried to sing his little hymn, and with the old tattered Bible pressed to his bosom, he went home to God.

Yes, reader, down in those dreary abodes we have heard the rustle of angels' wings; in the mire of the slums we have, with throbbing heart, traced the footprints of the Son of God; and through tearful vision have seen low in the gutters the foot of Jacob's ladder; and little children, aye, and old sinners, going up the steps to heaven.

CHAPTER XI.

Housekeeping and Home Life.



SABELLA'S home life was full of work ; nor was it without incident, joyous or sad.

In 1867 a sister's marriage set the joy-bells of the house a-ringing. If the burden and the strain of the preparations fell on our "Martha," her enthusiasm rose with the occasion. Her anxious and laborious weeks culminated in the usual festivities, and the young wedded pair took their departure to Australia, where the bridegroom was to settle as a minister of the Presbyterian Church. From Liverpool they set sail by *The Wanata*, an emigrant vessel bound for Melbourne.

The last echoes of the marriage feast and the farewell had scarcely died away, and we were thinking of the happy voyagers as just entering the sparkling seas and brilliant skies of the tropics, when we were suddenly awakened from our pleasant dream. A telegram announced, "*The Wanata* is down!" Yes, down to the last resting-place of many a noble ship and many a gallant sailor—down to the bottom of the sea. The ship had gone down in the Bay of Biscay. At the hour of midnight the passengers were wakened by a shock that could only mean fatal disaster. *The Wanata* had come into collision with another vessel, *The Ocean Queen*, and was fast sinking. Scenes of terror followed. The steerage passengers rushed on deck ;

and though in most cases only partially-clad, and in danger of starvation by cold, refused to go below. Some of the sailors broke into the stores, and, mad with drink, were going about with hatchets, smashing the passengers' chests, and appropriating money, watches, and other articles of value. The chief officer, with loaded revolver in hand, rushed into desperate conflict with the marauders, who, after a fierce encounter and some bloodshed, were placed in irons. Although it was impossible to keep *The Wanata* long afloat, the boats could not be lowered in so stormy a sea. A day and a half passed in terrible suspense and suffering, the other vessel lying-to with the view of affording relief. At length a lull in the storm furnished the longed-for opportunity of escape; and the passengers were conveyed in the boats to *The Ocean Queen*, with nothing but the clothes on their backs, the situation being too desperate to admit of anything beyond the salvation of bare life.

The wild excitement, the scrambles, struggles, fights, and vain attempts stealthily to carry away little parcels of clothing and valuables, made up a scene not easily described. As the unhappy emigrants were being lowered into the boats, two sailors, standing one on each side, by the captain's orders, of course, with knives ruthlessly cut off the forbidden bundles from their persons, a stern ordeal for the saving of life never to be forgotten. The ruling passion was strong in the face of death; human nature revealed itself in its various phases, even the comic side not being a-wanting.

As our friends were about to leave in the last boat with the captain, they found the steward busy washing his dishes.

“You see,” said he, calmly explaining, “I should n't feel comfortable if my dishes did n't go down clean. The only cabin passenger besides our friends was a young minister, a “swell,” who, on finding that he durst not carry any luggage with him, filled his pockets with paper collars!

The last boat had no more than reached *The Ocean Queen*, when *The Wanata* was seen to be on fire; the flames mounting to the sky, and the burning mass soon sinking into the depths.

It need not be said that Isabella received the shipwrecked couple with every token of sympathy and gratitude to God for their escape. They had lost their all: but in their calamity she found an opportunity of appearing in her happiest character. For their comfort the kind-hearted housekeeper reckoned it a small matter to sacrifice her own. To make room for others in their hour of need she was wont to leave little room for herself. In that way she kept my house for thirteen years, serving every one except herself, only serving herself last.

In June 1874, she was married to Rev. James A. Simpson, who for several years had laboured as missionary in the district, and was now the ordained pastor of the Mission congregation, known by the name of the ancient street on which it stands as Bonnethill Free Church. Passing from the charge of one minister's house to another made little difference in her position and work. Her passion for perfection in all the details of housekeeping was no less manifest in her new home than in her old one. Nor was she without difficulties and trials. To “make the two ends meet” was itself a task, all the more arduous from her generous disposition. Again and again she was

compelled to endure the worries of removal from house to house, and even of facing the almost insuperable difficulty of finding a suitable dwelling—incidents due to causes over which she had no control. With damp walls came rheumatism and other ills to visit or to stay. Her husband's health became a serious care. A dangerous throat complaint and other maladies more than once threatened to cut short his life. These events brought into full play her skill as a nurse; her resources as a housewife; her staying powers in the endurance of sleepless watchings and exhausting fatigues; and above all, her self-sacrificing love and tenderness. Very joyfully did she sacrifice not only her ease but her health also to save her husband's. The less work he was able to do, the more she did: without leaving the proper sphere of woman, she became his assistant in the ministry. In all her labours she was borne up by a bounding enthusiasm of love and cheerfulness.

A minister's house is a Christian hostelry, and the mistress of it has no easy task to perform. Evangelists, missionaries, ministers assisting in Communion services, pastors out collecting, brethren passing through, and others engaged in the Lord's work, must receive hospitality. In the olden times the people shared with the pastor in the duty and privilege of entertaining strangers. Too frequently the only hospitality dispensed now-a-days in the mansions of our wealthy communicants consists of sumptuous dinners, fashionable entertainments, with more grandeur than grace; where silver and self shine with equal lustre, and only they are invited who can appear in purple and fine linen; while the real guest, according to Christ's rule of hospitality, is absent. When a humble evangelist, or other servant of

God, engaged in the work for which Jesus died, needs a two or three weeks' bed and board, he must go to the minister's house; though in many a case that means household difficulty and debt. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests," and the rich Christians have splendid mansions; but the lowly servant of Christ is sometimes at a loss where to lay his head.

In her hospitality Isabella Macpherson was generous to a fault. Her joy in showing kindness on the one hand, and her dread of debt on the other, sometimes led to a severe pinching of herself in respect of very legitimate wants. But a fuller wardrobe or a richer diet for herself would have been to her a poor substitute for the happiness she found in giving away what she had, and in making others glad. Now it was a minister, or an evangelist, or a pastor from some poor country charge raising money to clear away debt from church or manse; again it was a company of students plodding on in their rugged way to the ministry, in whose eyes, grateful as they were for a little warm, genuine kindness, she seemed to be the greatest and best of women. Such was her enthusiasm in attending to her guests, that many a time her health suffered severely; but it was all for love of God and souls.

Perhaps, she was never happier than when dispensing aid to her pensioners, of whom her friends thought she was apt to have too many. A case of real need always touched her heart, and often commanded her last shilling. And here, kind reader, let me whisper this into your ear: her generosity went far down the scale of being; for all the strayed and starving cats of the locality knew her door, and she had joy in making glad the suffering and homeless of God's

forsaken creatures. As she did not leave her religion at the church gate, so she did not draw the line of her sympathies at human-kind. She loved God's "poor beasties," and like her ancestor of Culloden she took them in; for she could not forget that she was herself but a pensioner on the divine bounty, and that her own Lord was once homeless and poor. She knew that in dealing with human suffering nothing on earth goes further for good than a little warm sympathy, the one real salve for a thousand wounds. Despite all that is said about man's ingratitude, there is nothing that pays better than kindness. The pain and sorrow assuaged is a good return. The happiness produced is a rich harvest. The kindly feelings evoked is like a hundred per cent; and the door thus opened to the healing influences of the Gospel is a glorious reward.

But that was not all her home service. She cherished a passion for thoroughness in housekeeping, for perfectness in all the laborious details of cleanliness and comfort. To her this was real Christian work. To see her busy in kitchen and scullery, the fellow-servant of her servant, you would never dream that all this enthusiasm about the "many littles" that "make the meikle" of domestic comfort could possibly leave room for hard missionary work. This zeal in things material and earthly seems to be utterly inconsistent with hunting for souls. This crusade against the infinitesimal beginnings of dustiness and dirt, one might imagine, would leave neither time nor strength for the difficult task of cleansing some house in the district of its moral filthiness, or of guiding a poor fallen one to the fountain of cleansing.

To see her in the slums, standing in dens where sitting

is impossible or unsafe, kneeling by fever beds, pleading with drunkards, arguing with infidels, comforting the broken in heart, showing the way of salvation to the ignorant, appealing to careless sinners with tears, meeting scorn and cursing with serenity and tenderness, standing by the street-preacher in a dark and stormy winter night, or marching down the slushy street amidst showers of sleet with the spoils of victory, souls captured from the devil—you would little imagine that early morn had seen her cleaning and cooking; that noon still found her rubbing and mending; and only when a hard day's domestic work had been gone through did she reckon herself free as one of Christ's volunteers to try her hand at the hardest of all tasks, doing good to them that hate good, and seeking to save those who are bent on ruin. To her the field was one and undivided: she served her Master as heartily on the one side of it as on the other. She went about her spiritual work in a natural way, and her earthly toils were wrought with a heavenly motive. From the one set of things she passed to the other by a single step: it was only going out of one room of the house into another. When busy on Saturday nights cooking the Sabbath dinner, in which she took some pride and much pains, she invariably retired in the midst of this work to pray for the busy student then immersed in his pulpit preparations. Her heart relieved of this burden, she would return singing to her labours in the kitchen.

By putting herself alongside of her servants she won their affection, and in several instances was instrumental in their conversion. To many a Christian lady, a round of household work would be a means of grace and health, and would

increase their usefulness and joy. There are thousands of gifted women who sincerely desire to do some real work for God, but they cannot find their hands. Their moral fibre is relaxed in the lap of luxury; their spiritual talent is tied up in the napkin of ease. Possessing money, leisure, knowledge, and the kind heart, they lack only the rude health, the nerve to "rough it." Now, this they could acquire by hard, menial work at home; self-denying exercise in the house is the best training for joyful, self-sacrificing work on the mission-field. This home work, too, serves to complete and round the character of Christian workers—it broadens their sympathies; renders them more natural; checks the tendency to spiritual pride arising from much work in public; and saves from a narrow religiosity and a morbid pietism, so unlike Christ in the breadth of His humanness and the realness of His life.

Home is the first, in some respects the most difficult, sphere of Christian work. In housekeeping there is room both for genius and grace. There is no discipline more severe; no test of character more searching; no result more excellent. To rule a kingdom may not be more difficult than to rule a house. Martha was at fault—not for serving, but for being cumbered in her service. To toil in household duties and not be unduly cumbered is a rare virtue. To keep the domestic machinery from creaking needs the oil of a gracious wisdom. There is a cheerfulness, a home gospel of kindness, that drowns every discord in its own sweetness. Much religion may be put into pounds, shillings, and pence: that is often a glorious meeting when the straitened housekeeper gets the two ends to meet. A Christian woman can put the finest intellect

into cooking, the highest grace into cleaning. To address a meeting may need less virtue than to dress a collar. There may be no more glory to God in Bible-reading than in boiling potatoes. Godly women ministered to Christ of their substance; so perhaps it was that they were last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre. Care for a hungering Christ taught them to watch a dying Christ, and prepared them to welcome a risen Christ. The kitchen, the cross, and the grave, are three chief stations in the Christian woman's service. Christian work begins at home: the successful worker always begins there. There is no sphere on earth in which all that is beautiful and noble, all that is womanly and in harmony with God's purpose in woman, can find so perfect a development as home service. As the house is pre-eminently woman's kingdom, woman's world, so her first Home Mission-field is home.

At home, Isabella was wont to spend much time in secret prayer. Here are some of her private jottings:—

“August 14th.—Some liberty in prayer. Able to speak as in the presence of God, as if He was hearing and comforting my poor, broken heart. Resolved, by His grace, to spend this month in more prayer than ever before, as I do feel as if the time has come, the time that He has set. O Lord, hear me! O Lord, answer; forgive and bless, for Thine own name's sake!”

“15th.—Not so much on my knees as I would like; but looking up all the day through with a little hope.”

“16th.—Weak in body and weak in faith; but I know I shall get an answer to my prayers soon in the Lord's way; and He doeth all things well.”

“17th.—An agony of soul; ‘strong cries and tears!’”

“23rd.—Know not how I have spent the rest of this week.

Truly my prayers will not save me ; I trust only in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus."

"*24th.*—Got light in the morning from the text for the day : 'This God is our God for ever and ever.' All trust in any other gone ; no trust in means apart from God ; but I feel sure He is to bless the means."

"*25th.*—Felt very near to God all day : never in all my life felt so calm and strong in faith.

"*26th.*—Day passed : not much real prayer. Oh, how soon I forget the goodness of God to me !"

"*Nov. 30th.*—Resolved to be careful for nothing, but take all to God in prayer ; to live more for eternity and less for time."

"*Feb. 25th, 1882.*—Prayer—(1) For my soul—that I may resist temptation, grow in grace, live to God, and do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. (2) For my body—for good health, if it be His will ; that I may be enabled to perform the duties of my house, and do a little work for His glory. (3) Praise and thanksgiving for past mercies in answer to prayer ; and prayer that He may, if it be for His glory, grant me my desires. (4) For my husband—that he may be strengthened ; that he may get more and more grace and wisdom to do his work ; and that he may preach with power, being filled with the Spirit. (5) For our house—that everything may be conducted in it according to the will of God. (6) For Bonnet-hill and all departments of the work. (7) For the Manse debt, that the Lord may speak to the gentlemen who have charge of the Manse fund, that they may not get rest until they give us the help others got.

The heart fixing upon God ;

The heart's desire from God ;

The heart's dependence upon God ;

The heart's helplessness apart from God."

In these private records are found again and again lists of names of persons to be prayed for, including all her relatives from her husband to the remotest and least. Special petitions for each according to the situation and need of each ; prayers about Church debt ; about dry rot, that it

may not return; in short, about the most minute and trivial details of every-day life. Thus it was her habit to carry all her burdens to the throne of grace, and leave them there. One result of this was that in her ordinary intercourse she did not seem to have any burdens.

Her much-marked Bible tells the story of her love for the Word of God. The passages that speak of the personal Saviour and the redemption through His blood—such as “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world”—are deeply interlined. The words that bear on the FORGIVENESS OF SINS and PERSONAL HOLINESS have evidently had studious attention. “Thou hast known my soul in adversities,” and many such utterances, must have been as an inspiration of God in the time of her trouble. The promises and encouragements connected with prayer are numerous marked, and doubtless closely engaged her eager spirit. Exhortations to all Christian duties were not lightly passed over: to “watch and pray”; to “be careful for nothing”; to “be not weary in well doing”; to “abound in thanksgiving”; to “be kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another”—and such texts as these, lay near her heart. “Study to be quiet” has a characteristic mark; for she hated busy-bodyism, and was wont to suppress tale-bearing with a strong hand. “We will go into His tabernacles, we will worship at His footstool,” and similar portions bearing on public worship, are specially noted. She had observed with pain that certain young Christians were putting public work on the morning of the Lord’s Day in the room of public worship. Boldly calling them to their duty she would say, “God’s order is—first worship, then work”; and she carefully trained her own youthful assistants on that principle.

The Word of God was her meditation day and night ;
and she could truly say :

“ O Book ! infinite sweetness ! let my heart
Suck every letter, and a honey gain ;
Precious for any grief in any part—
To clear the breast, to mollify all pain.

“ Thou art all health ; health thriving till it make
A full eternity,

Heaven lies flat in thee,
Subject to every mounter's bended knee.

“ Such are thy secrets ; which my life makes good,
And comments on thee.

“ Stars are poor books, and oftentimes do miss ;
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.”

Her epistolary correspondence was of the simplest ; mere notes of friendship, full, indeed, of her wonted kindness, but little else. To a sister-in-law she writes :

“ CLUNY COTTAGE, *Jan. 11th, 1877.*

“ MY DEAR MRS. B——,

“ Forgive me for being so long in answering your kind letter : you have no idea how much work we have at this season of the year. I have to thank dear A—— for her pretty present. We are so glad to see she can do such nice work. Tell her to write me a wee letter, and I will send her a small present. Would she like a bit of music, or a pair of gloves ? What is her size in kid ? Tell her to say what is her mamma's size also. Dear Jamie is away ordaining a young minister at the Free Church of Liff, a few miles from this. I am quite anxious about him, he has such a cold. Our house is very damp : indeed, the doctor was saying to some friends that he wondered we were both so well, and that the sooner we got out of it the better. It is very unlike our dear old home ; but although we have suffered a good deal, there is one comfort, we are just where the Lord has put us : and He knows what is best for us.

“ Hilltown was re-opened on Sabbath : it is very pretty. The

collection for the day £200 3s. 3d.—not so bad! We are so glad to hear that dear uncle is so much stronger : give our love to him.

“Jamie has to go to Aberdeen on Saturday to Mr. Yule’s communion. Pray that he may be restored from this cold : I so much fear his sore throat.”

To the same:—

“CLUNY COTTAGE, *Jan. 22nd.*

“MY DEAR MRS. B——,

“I received your kind note. We are very sorry to hear that dear uncle is not feeling so well. I am glad to say that Jamie is quite well again. He is away spending the day along with John at Newport. Monday is their only free day ; and they need rest and change after the Sabbath’s work. Mr. M—— did not call for us ; but we could not expect him, we are so far from town. You thought the distance I had to walk great when you were here ; but if you saw it now I am sure you would pity me. You will be busy before and after removing. We would be glad to remove if we knew where : it is a most difficult thing to get a house here. I fear our friends at Maryfield will be out also, as their house is to be sold, and far more is wanted for it than it is worth.

‘JEHOVAH-JIREH.’

“My servant and self have been ill with cold. We are just going to Maryfield to tea, and, as she says, *for change of air.*”

To her mother-in-law :—

“WOODVILLE PLACE, DUNDEE.

“OUR DEAR MOTHER,

“We are very glad to hear that you got safe home, and none the worse of the cold weather. . . . Jamie enjoyed his visit to Greenock very much, and had splendid meetings. He came home on Saturday evening, and had no time in Glasgow. We are very glad to learn that A—— has got more music pupils ; I have no doubt she will like that work better than the other.

We shall be delighted to see R—— and A—— on the day you mention. We have had a delightful communion season : splendid preaching all through. Jamie had a letter from Mr. Hood asking him to take the thanksgiving service after your communion. So, if all is well you may expect to see him on that day. Mr. H. invited me to come along with Jamie ; but as you know, I never go from home.”

To the same :—

“ BONNETHILL F. C. MANSE.

“ OUR DEAR MOTHER,

“ I am just going to the station with your dress. I suppose you will have to send to Kingsmuir for it. I hope it will please you. You may not need the sixteen yards ; but it will come to be of use—re-making your dress. We are both pretty well, although the hard visiting has told on us. We have had sad visitors here — poverty, sickness, and death. Jamie has a funeral almost every day, if not two : he is away at one now.”

In her home-life two features were strongly marked : her habit of denying herself, and her practice in suppressing gossip. She always cared for herself least. She pinched nobody but herself. She would mend her own gloves till they were past mending, and at the same time send a present of new gloves to a friend. She could take her own tea without sugar, and also carry tea and sugar to some poor creature in a garret. As to the evil tongue, she began early and sternly to deal with it. One day Mrs. —— said that “ Miss So-and-So said.”

“ Then let us go at once and face Miss So-and-So.”

“ Oh, that would never do.”

“ Then am I to leave the lie with you ?”

“ No, no !”

“ Well, go I shall.”

Away they went to face one and another of the gossips,

There was a thorough “redding up”; and after that there was no more tittle-tattle so far as she was concerned, and her house was kept free from that nuisance.

Her chief recreation was in a little garden where she cultivated ferns and flowers. Her summer holiday for many years was spent at Ballater-on-Deeside, in rambles among the heather; in climbing Morven and Lochnagar; in searching for curious plants and rare ferns in the corries and by the burn-sides. Next to her love of souls was her love of nature—especially the birchen woods and heathclad hills. But whether work or play, evangelizing or shopping, all was done in the spirit of the resolution to “take all to God in prayer.” In her private jottings she says, “Prayer, that we may be guided aright about the holiday: *not a step* without the Lord.” It was this touch of prayer that turned everything into gold.

The even tenor of her home life was now and again broken by the usual incidents that add so tender a pathos to our earthly sojourn. Isabella had stood and ministered at many a dying bed; a new and more touching experience befel her in the death of her mother. Calm, serene, ready, the aged saint awaited the summons to depart with unruffled composure. Like another she could say, “I am not troubled about the question of living or dying: if I die, I will be with the Lord; and if I live, the Lord will be with me.” For long years she had seen enough of “the glory” to “rejoice in the hope”: but while she was constantly sending up memorials to the King in reference to her home-going, she always “left the date blank,” because “it belonged to the King to fill in that.” As her children stood around her bed, the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel

according to John was read at her own request. This portion had been the last spiritual meal of several generations of ancestors as they entered the valley. Each verse was followed by an expression of her delight. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

"How beautiful!" she said.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

"Oh, that's fine!" she said.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"How blessed! how grand!" was the response.

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

"Oh yes, yes, yes!" she said.

The reading done, the last fond glance given to each in turn, she finally said with mingled dignity, solemnity, and sweetness, "Don't weep; I am going home to God," and dropped into the perfect repose of them that sleep in Jesus.

Her mother's death was one of Isabella's deepest sorrows, and it added a mellowed tenderness to her character and work. Her heart lay empty, like Hagar's bottle on the burning sands; and in the intense longings of her affectionate nature, she turned more eagerly than ever to the Well that is never dry. Thus, the hallowed grief and the cherished memory became the means of a fresh inspiration for the remaining stage of her wilderness journey. And much as she enjoyed everything of real good in life, more than ever her song was—

"Pass away earthly joy,
Jesus is mine!"

CHAPTER XII.

“One by One.”



IT is easier to preach to a thousand than to one. The enthusiasm that is no wise dependent on numbers or publicity is noble and Christ-like. Happy is the worker who would a thousand times rather win a soul than win the plaudits of ten thousand!

Dealing with individuals is the most difficult work: it needs a rare combination of wisdom, love, and patience. Face to face with a human soul in all its pride and subtilty, you quickly discover your own ignorance and weakness. You are hunting a spirit; grasping the shadow of a shade. If you would know what sin really is in its falseness, its evasiveness, its desperateness, its infinite resources, angelic appearances, and fiendish craftiness—try your hand on some unawakened sinner, or even earnest inquirer. If you can thread the interminable labyrinth of the heart's refuges of lies, and come out again without a fall, or a blunder, or a surprising sense of your own spiritual imbecility, then are you the wisest of mankind.

Our worker gave herself to this kind of service; and in the course of her Christian life spoke to over twenty thousand persons, one by one. At her house where she trysted to meet them; in their own homes; at the prayer-meeting and ordinary services of the church; in the inquiry-room;

on the outskirts of the open-air gathering; and in the casual intercourse of the street—she found her opportunity, or made it. She dealt with all sorts of persons, from the scholarly divine entangled with modern error; from the most refined of her own sex, down through all the grades—professional men, business men, working-people, servant girls, factory hands, and school children—to the street arabs, the poorest hag of the slums, and the vilest profligate. Nor did she find any material difference, as she often told, between the slum sinner and the genteel sinner; between the mill girl and the learned preacher. Sin can trip gaily in silks and satins, as well as slouch in rags. Self-righteousness can strut in the godless criminal and the profane mocker as proudly as in the church member and the devout formalist. The most illiterate person can bolt the heart's door against Christ with an argument as effectively as the man with a whole library in his head. Sin, the soul's evil genius, puts out the eyes: the devil does the rest.

In dealing with inquirers, Isabella was searching and thorough. "There are strange conversions and queer Christians now-a-days," she was wont to say; "they take sin so easy, and conversion seems to come as a matter of course: I can't understand them." The work of guiding the seeker after God—so difficult, so delicate, so vital—is too often done hastily and superficially, and the result is unsatisfactory in the extreme. During her long trouble of soul, our worker had been driven to the Word of God, and shut in to the simple, infallible testimony of the Scriptures. She was no longer dependent on frames and feelings. She had come to know the full meaning of the

fundamental question, “What saith the Lord?” To this test she brought everything; to this testimony she always led her inquirers. She had learned in her own experience not a little of the subtle workings of the human heart, deceitful even in the earnest seeker for God and holiness; and she found that the most effective means for bringing the inquirer’s difficulties to view and removing them was the Word of God skilfully handled and directly applied. In this important service she was often successful, even in the case of highly-educated persons, who are apt to be more sophisticated and warped in their religious thoughts and feelings than the ignorant or illiterate.

One evening in a meeting for inquirers she had a long and searching conversation with a gifted young lady, which resulted in her conversion. Seeing the rock ahead of one possessing the talent of music above her fellows, she advised the lady to abandon fashionable life, to come clean out from the world and consecrate her gift of song to Christ. This she solemnly promised to do.

“Begin then at once; take your stand for Christ; go home and tell your sisters what the Lord has done for you.”

“Oh, they will not listen to me, they will only laugh and mock; I cannot do that.”

“But whatever they may say or do, you must be faithful to God. Besides, you don’t know how they will take it: go you and try.”

She went home, spoke to her sisters; and to her astonishment, instead of mocking, they listened with eagerness, became seekers of salvation themselves, and soon after found the Saviour. All those sisters consecrated their

talents to God, and ever since have occupied eminent places and rendered invaluable service to the cause of Christ.

Miss B., another young lady of superior education, says :

“Two years ago I was present at an evangelistic meeting in Hilltown Church. The evangelist took for his text the word *Opportunity*. As I sat and listened, a strange feeling came over me; and a voice seemed to whisper, ‘You have lost many an opportunity of speaking for Jesus, and therefore cannot be a true disciple of His.’ I remained to the second meeting and told Miss M—— my state of mind, and very soon Mrs. Simpson came over, and in a kindly yet surprised manner asked if I were not a Christian. I admitted that I had professed to be a follower of Jesus for three years, but that I now realized that I had not been living as I ought to have done, and had not the assurance of forgiveness. Mrs. Simpson spoke long and earnestly to me that evening, but the only words I remember her saying are, ‘Perhaps you are trusting to your frame of mind or to your feelings, and not to Christ Himself?’ This was exactly what I was doing; but it was not till next day that I had perfect rest in believing, and at Mrs. Simpson’s request I lost no time in informing her of the change. Since that time, whenever I am low-spirited or inclined to give way to my feelings, I remember her words, and am sure to find comfort and peace in my risen Redeemer through His own Word. I will remember Mrs. Simpson as long as I live. I loved to be near her. I used to get a blessing when by her side even when she did not speak, it was her kindly manner; and when she did speak it was not so much what she said as the manner in which she said it. Oh, it was good to be beside her!”

This last remark of Miss B—— shows how much under

God depends on *the spirit* of the worker : instrumentally it is almost everything.

“Maggie, do n’t take your Christianity from Christians : take it from Christ,” she said to a young woman. Maggie was startled by the advice : it was like a new revelation to her—it proved to be a message from God. She had been for some time painfully conscious of living at a “poor dying rate” ; but what was the cause or what the remedy she could not find. Now it was flashed upon her, all was plain ; she had been content to be and to live like others around. With the new light came new life. In her subsequent course the holy elevation, the spiritual intensity of her character, and her un murmuring patience, amidst no ordinary sufferings and trials, have shown the source from which since that time she has been taking her Christianity.

A young man writes :

“When I look upon my early life I can remember being in great trouble of soul. I often thought of the Judgment and of having to stand before the Judge. I tried to please God by living a better life ; but in this I failed, and I found myself more wretched than before. My mind was in great darkness ; I wondered how I could find salvation. I remember being ill ; I thought I was dying. I felt as if I was about to leap into darkness without one ray of light. When I came to reside in Dundee, I was quite a youth. The pleasures of town life were very enticing. Satan had marked me for his own. For a time I was dazzled with the allurements of a sinful life. Bad companions tried to drag me down to ruin of body, soul, and character. They invited me to the dram-shop to join them in the social glass. They showed me the pleasure of indulging in other sins ; and in this way I was

tempted to go in the way of evil doers and neglect my soul's salvation. But I was not left to myself. The Friend of sinners was near; Jesus was seeking the wandering one.

“I can remember how Mrs. Simpson came to me when I was standing with other lads on the street, and invited me to the meeting. When I consented to go, how pleased she was! She led me off in triumph, and kept me by herself all the time the meeting lasted. I was awakened and sought the Saviour. He revealed Himself to my soul, and I found salvation in His finished work.

“‘I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.’

“I told Mrs. Simpson how hard it was to get broken off from my companions. She overcame my difficulty by introducing me to other companions—Christian ones. When she saw me started to live the Christian life, she would not be satisfied until I commenced to work for the Lord. She took me to the Sabbath School to witness for the Master. I have many blessings to thank the Lord for; I feel that I have to render special thanks for Christian friends. I often remember that dear friend, Mrs. Simpson. I shall never forget her kindness; her memory will always be sweet to me.”

This young man is now, and has been for years, the devoted and successful superintendent of a Sabbath School.

“Why do you come to the meeting, Jessie? Do you wish to be saved?”

Jessie B., a young girl, could give no satisfactory answer.

“What is between you and the Saviour, Jessie?”

Jessie is silent. She is now in the hands of a friend to her soul. Isabella explains the way of salvation, and with exquisite tenderness urges the girl to immediate acceptance of Christ. Jessie hesitates and is about to leave, one more victim of delay. "If you were in my garden, Jessie, and I promised you a flower, what would you think if I gave you a *withered one*? Are you going to spend your life in the world and sin, and then offer Jesus the withered flower?" This went like a sword to Jessie's heart. A sleepless night followed, with strong crying to God: next morning saw her decided and saved.

"You are driving my daughter daft," said a woman to Isabella who had followed the girl home. Mother and sisters were wild with rage: they could not, they would not, put up with this way of doing.

"Annie, are you converted?" said Isabella.

"Yes," was the reply.

Our worker explained the "blessed daftness" of conversion, and despite opposition said, "Let us pray." As Isabella poured out her heart in prayer with all her wonted power and tenderness, the mother and sisters began to weep. A new door was thus opened; a new friendship formed; and the visitor was invited to return and take the daughters to church that they might get the same *daftness* as their sister Annie.

Lily — was engaged by Mrs. Simpson for domestic service—in room of her servant, who was laid aside by temporary sickness. During this brief period Lily had her eyes opened to a new kind of life. She often found her mistress alone reading her Bible. This struck the girl with amazement; she could not understand it; what

pleasure could there be in it? Perceiving this, her mistress said to her one day, “Lily, I love to be alone; I could live on bread and water: I live on Christ.” This astonished her still more, as it was intended to do. Isabella’s ways, “so holy and so kind,” as she tells, touched the girl’s heart, and she began “to feel very strange.”

One night at a meeting the hymn, “Except ye be born again,” was sung. Lily could not join in singing it; she felt she was not born again. She came home in distress. Her mistress noticing her trouble immediately proceeded to deal with her about salvation. Lily could not tell her difficulty, simply because she could not discover it. The plan of salvation was carefully explained to her. Pointing to a picture on the wall representing the Saviour sitting alone in a wilderness, a fox peering at Him over the rocky brow of the hill, while a bird perched on a tree near by is looking down sorrowfully on Him, Isabella quoted our Lord’s words, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” Isabella then burst into tears and wept much as she spoke of Jesus, His sufferings, and His love. Bringing the girl face to face with the Saviour in the Word, she said: “Leave yourself with Jesus, Lily.” By and by light came with the Word, and Lily rejoiced in the Lord. The rest of her term was spent in a new world. She loved her mistress with a passionate love, admiring the beauty of her life and striving hard to copy her ways.

“I wondered at her,” says Lily. “She would weep at the sight of misery, although she knew it was brought on by sin; and yet she was as bold as a lion. When I left for my new situation, she prayed a beautiful prayer for me, that

the Lord would keep me. I was afraid to go away. Then she put her hands about my neck and wept like a child. In my new place the thought of her always came back at worship; and the remembrance of her love and her words did me good. Oh, what a friend I have lost!”

Lily told the story of her conversion to another servant, who, as the immediate result of the simple testimony, was led to seek and find the Saviour. If mistresses got nearer to their maids in Christian sympathy, we should hear less about the difficulties with servants. As in the case of many other social troubles, the solution lies in the charity that seeketh not its own.

M. T., a young woman, tells the following story of her conversion:

“From childhood I had desires to be good. I was often thinking of death, and wishing to be happy. It is wonderful how God keeps us for the day of conversion, and how He brings it about. Mrs. Simpson was holding meetings for prayer, and J. F., a Christian worker of the church, asked me if I would go. I hesitated at first, but went. I sat in the first meeting a trembling sinner. I felt it was a holy place. I said to myself, ‘This place is not for me; it is for God’s people.’ Mrs. Simpson shook hands with me very kindly at the close. I went home and went to bed, but I could not sleep; as I lay on my pillow, I could hear the praying. I turned from side to side to get away from it, but could not. The very bed seemed to be on fire. Next day the same worker said: ‘It is the Spirit of God that is striving with you; take care you do not quench the Spirit.’ My distress of soul was deep—so deep I was afraid I would have to give up my work. At night I was afraid to fall asleep,

lest I should wake up in hell. I kept on praying and reading God's Word. I was like the publican, continually crying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I came to see Mr. Simpson, and he said, 'M., what ails you at Jesus?' I could do nothing but weep that night. I walked along the streets, looking up to heaven—looking for something for my soul. I encouraged myself by saying, 'He has saved others; the Lord can save me!' When I was sitting in the church, the things preached seemed spoken to me. I felt condemned; I wished at times I was outside, in some wide field where I could roar. Again and again Mrs. Simpson prayed with me and for me. I saw all my sins rising up before my eyes, even little sins I had forgotten. One day J. F. said to me at my work: 'The Lord Jesus is seeking for you.' 'Well,' I said, 'I am seeking for Him, I will doubt Him no longer.' I at once remembered the words, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' The light of His peace filled my soul. That day at the dinner hour I went home singing:—

“ ‘Ring the bells of heaven; there is joy to-day!’

“I had got a new joy to my soul. The thought flashed through me like a fiery dart, 'Maybe it's a false peace you have got!' 'No, no,' I could say at once, 'that cannot be; I could not pray in this manner before when I was a sinner.'”

This young woman became a member of the church, and is now a devoted Christian and a helper in the work. Her sister passed through a similar experience at the same time. She says:

“I went with my sister to Mrs. Simpson's prayer-meeting. She gave out a psalm; she prayed; I shook as she prayed. After I got home, I took the Bible and

read it. Everything I read seemed to condemn me. I sat long over it, into the morning. I visited Mrs. Simpson. She gave me this verse, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ But I could get no comfort from it. I was always looking for something like a sign. One morning after mother had wakened us for work, the words flashed into my soul, ‘Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.’ That morning I sang the hymn,

“‘Precious Name, oh, how sweet!’

“My friends thought I was going daft, I was so filled with joy in God’s salvation. I see how God can keep us from the day of our conversion.”

This young woman is a member of the mission church, and a devoted Christian.

Jessie E——, an intelligent young woman from Morayshire, invited by a friend, attends a service in the mission church, and is deeply impressed. At the close of the meeting she falls into the hands of Isabella, who, in a long and searching conversation, opens to her the way of salvation, and finishes her dealings with the inquirer with a fervent prayer and a touching appeal. The little spark is thus fanned into a flame. Jessie, with the new light in her soul—half-believing, half-doubting, goes her way trembling; on the street the love of God in Christ suddenly fills her heart, and she reaches home in a flood of joy. With a bursting heart she writes a full account of the marvellous change to her brother in Elgin, who reads the story of his sister’s conversion with amazement and alarm. The letter

is a message from God: his sister's story cuts the ground from beneath his feet. He cries to the Lord for mercy, and sooner than he thought it possible the answer of grace comes, and he too is saved. He must now work for his new Master. He is consumed with a desire to preach Christ to the whole world. After a season of study at Mr. H. G. Guinness's Institute, London, this gifted young man sails for Africa, travels into the interior, prepares a dictionary of the Balolo tongue, and lays the foundations of the kingdom of God in the heart of the dark continent.

For the salvation of those for whose souls nobody cares—the tramp, the tinker, the gypsy, the showman—she cherished a tender solicitude, and took no small pains in carrying the message of God to them. One summer at Ballater when enjoying a much needed rest, she was sorely pressed in spirit about the salvation of the men employed in connection with a travelling menagerie which was “exhibiting” in the village. Watching for an opportunity near the show, she entered into conversation with the lion tamer, a young coloured man of princely physique and manly character who daily risked his life among the fierce natives of the Indian jungle and the African wild. He touchingly admitted that every time he entered the lions' cage he was “in terror of death”; and in a tone of sadness said he felt certain he would one day perish. Why then did he not give it up? Because he had no other means of winning his bread. She appealed to him about his soul with the utmost fervour and tenderness; and when she spoke of “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” he was deeply affected. Since he could not give over those terrible

ventures, had he not the greater need of Christ? If the lions sprang on him, how well it would be with him were he safe in the arms of the Saviour! He accepted her affectionate counsels with expressions of gratitude, and she left the arrow of God's message in his conscience. Some five months afterwards the sad announcement was made that the Lion-king had perished—torn to pieces by his infuriated subjects of the den.

Isabella was also much exercised about another class of wanderers—the theological gypsy, the tinker in religion, the pulpit showman, the young apostles of “advanced thought”—who, having left the paths of sound doctrine, have gone a-gypsying in regions vague and obscure, and lost themselves in mists of deadly error. According to this new teaching, man is scarcely fallen; and sin, being only an incidental infirmity of human nature, is sure to vanish as the race develops. So religion consists in awakening the Christ that slumbers in every soul, and holiness is the culture of the good qualities of the natural heart; while God being of necessity the universal Father, a future is certainly coming when somehow all evil shall disappear from the Universe, as it is bound to do. In dealing with those professors of the new wisdom, Isabella's debating power not less than her womanly tact stood her in good stead.

In a long discussion with one she found that the young theologian carried in his vest pocket a neat little theory of the nature of God and the Universe, which could be comprehended as easily as the simplest sum in arithmetic; and if all things in heaven and earth did not square with his scheme of “six and six make twelve,” so much the worse for the Universe and its Author. The standard by which

he judged the government of God and settled the question of man's destiny was his own feelings. By this standard he measured the Divine Being and the mysteries of the Universe and Eternity. He talked flippantly on the most momentous topics. If things were so and so, the Universe was not worthy of his presence, and he would get out of this badly-managed world by the nearest cut. *What he did not like, he would not believe.* That is the spirit, the unspoken principle of the very Broad School. But some of Isabella's young philosophers were not so far gone as that: they only leaned heavily that way.

A remarkable change subsequently came over the opinions and preaching of more than one of those ministers. In one instance, indeed, the people said, “Our pastor is a new man and a new preacher”; an awakening in the congregation and his return to the old Gospel having occurred simultaneously. How far the prayers and personal dealings of Isabella had to do with those happy events is known to Him with whom are all secrets; but the ministers themselves speak with admiration of the noble character of their faithful monitor. It may be added that in these discussions our worker always maintained perfect calmness and serenity of temper, even when her antagonists were at a red heat; nor did she fail to accompany her plain speaking with her wonted generosity and unbounded hospitality. It ought not to be overlooked, however, that if she disliked dangerous error, she no less detested dead orthodoxy.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Visitor's Finger-Post.



HE wise visitor does not outrun Providence, but follows close behind. The messenger of Christ who walks in the footsteps of the Divine Visitor cannot fail. Affliction is the stern fore-runner who prepares the way of the Christian visitor, the good angel of the evangel who rolls away the stone. It may be poverty, or sickness, or sorrow, or some crushing calamity : but it is the finger of Providence pointing the way. An invisible hand is chalking the door, and the voice of God is saying, "Now if ever ! Now or never !" Opportunity is God near : it is God working ; Jesus of Nazareth passing by.

Like other workers, Isabella was often sent for by the persons who had chased her from their doors, and was hailed as an angel by the sinners who had treated her as a fiend. A thorn in the pillow, she many a time found, turned cursing into prayer, and was the visitor's best help. When the wild lights of sin went out, she came in with the silver lamp of the Gospel, and received a welcome. The season of affliction was her choice opportunity and loud call to service. One day, in the course of her visiting, she heard that a little boy lay ill of fever, and was believed to be dying. By some workers fever would be deemed a sufficient reason for passing the door ;

Isabella was accustomed to regard it as a good excuse for introducing herself. She possessed no physical courage : to encounter a few harmless cows on a country road filled her with terror. But for the deadliest infectious disease she had no fear. For appalling combinations of evil she refused to turn back. To fight with men full of hatred to God and more fierce than wild beasts her courage never failed ; and to suffer in her own tender nature for the good of others she always firmly braced herself. The home of this fevered child is poor ; the bed is mean ; death seems near ; and nobody would dream that God has a great purpose here. Our visitor calls me in : a few words are spoken, a prayer is offered. The afflicted boy looks up through the mists of his fevered vision, and sees one like an angel standing by his bed-side. He recovers. The impression of the visitor's presence becomes an imperishable memory. For so small a service the affectionate lad is for ever grateful. In the Sabbath School he proves to be an apt scholar, and soon passes on to the minister's class. By-and-by he enters into communion with the Church ; becomes a Sabbath-school teacher ; a leader among our Christian young men ; a student ; a minister ; and is now the able and successful pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Canada. The links in this chain, as happily in so many others, are the visitor, the teacher, and the pastor. But the visitor was pioneer. The pearl had never seen the light of the sun unless the brave diver had plunged into the dangerous and gloomy depths.

One day, in exploring some wretched dens, she came upon a poor woman, a widow, nursing her dying boy. The child's illness and the mother's distress furnished an opportunity which our visitor was quick to seize. The boy had

learned something about the Saviour at the Sabbath School, and was telling his ignorant mother all he knew. Thus the mother's heart was prepared for the truth. Our visitor's appearance on the scene was opportune. Dickie, the boy, became a bright Christian, and died in the faith. The mother sought and found the Lord, and became a member of the Mission Church.

Another day she was passing the house of a Roman Catholic from which she was sternly excluded. The door was standing ajar, and she could see a pale-faced lad, with a dying look, on a bed in a corner of the room. She prays in her heart for an opportunity to speak to the young man, and ventures in. They tell her that they are not of her way of religion, and broadly hint she had better go. The dying lad casts a wistful glance towards her, in response to a kindly word. She begs permission to speak a little to him. This is granted. She finds him ignorant, anxious about his soul, and afraid to die. He drinks in the word of life, and is saved.

The house of a certain ungodly couple was completely closed against God and all good. Scarlatina entered. Several of the children were taken ill and one of them died. The mother, hitherto reckless in matters of religion, was plunged into sorrow. The visitor, seeing her opportunity, made her way into the bereaved home, and throwing her arms around the neck of the weeping mother, sat down and wept with her. To soothe and teach the broken-hearted parent, she sang to her the meaning of the bereavement in the words of the hymn:—

“ Behold Me standing at the door,
And hear Me pleading evermore
With gentle voice ; oh, heart of sin,
May I come in ? May I come in ? ”

The sad heart of the mother was impressed or soothed, but that was all. Another day the visitor found the children alone, and, sitting down amongst them, began to speak and sing of the Saviour. The mother, returning from her shopping, and, hearing the voice of singing, stood outside the half-opened door and listened. On her ear fell the words:—

“Oh, depth of mercy, can it be,
That gate was left ajar for me?”

Suddenly the woman's heart was pierced with a sense of sin, such as she had never known. It was a new sorrow: she now began to “lament after the Lord.” She rushed in, and, to the glad surprise of the visitor, raised the old cry, “What must I do to be saved?” A period of earnest seeking was followed by her conversion. The Lord had now entered the house; and the visitor became the mother's dearest friend. Before this wife's testimony, confirmed by her holy, cheerful, marvellously-changed life, the heart of the man, by-and-by, gave way, and he too was saved. Thus another family was lifted out of utter heathenism into blessed Christian life, and that through the visitor wisely reading on the Finger-post of Providence: “This way, visitor; you are wanted here!” Broken hearts are open hearts.

A little barefooted waif whom she met in the slums, was trusted to her house by the promise of shoes. A friend calling, found Isabella on her knees on the kitchen floor brushing a boot, while Tommy squatted by her side was busy at work on the other. All the time she was speaking about One to whom she wished to introduce Tommy as his best friend. Now and again there was a pause in the

brushing, when some truth was pressed home ; but the preaching and the polishing went on with equal enthusiasm. Tommy's face was radiant under the Gospel of the boots : but the comfort for his suffering feet was the tinkling of a silver bell calling the little waif to the house of God and the service of Christ.

One day a young man in rags appeared at the house begging. His breast was open to the blast. He had no coat. He had been out in the heavy rain, and the water pouring down from his bare head to his shoeless feet, was dripping from the long strips and thready tatters that served for clothes ; and he bore on his face the unmistakable signs of starvation. She did not know him ; but taking him on trust she relieved his more pressing wants, and promised that if he returned on a day named, she would "rig him out." The wretched waif broke down under this kindness, and listened with eager attention to the story of the Redeemer's love. He returned, and was duly "rigged out." He attended the church and became an earnest disciple. Afterwards he developed into a "character" ; and has since emigrated to America, a Christian young man full of promise and hope.

Besides many such minor occasions, two striking events, which powerfully impressed the public mind, furnished the Christian worker with special opportunities of telling out the message of the gospel. These were the fall of the Tay Bridge, and the "Dark Day."

The falling of the great bridge on the evening of Sabbath, December the 28th, 1879, involving the total destruction of a passing train with its precious freight of

seventy or eighty passengers, not one of whom escaped, struck the community as with a bolt from the unseen. In the thick gloom of the tragic event, God seemed to come very near. Hearts were opened to the truth that had never been opened before; chords vibrated to the message of Divine mercy in souls long silent and dead. Many resolved never again to travel on the Lord's Day—and they never did. Not a few were awakened to a sense of things eternal, and some found the gate of Heaven hard by the wreck of the Tay Bridge. Our worker, ever on the watch for opportunities, found innumerable chinks and rents suddenly riven in the hard clay of human hearts, into which she was not slow to drop the precious seed of God's Word.

A widowed mother told me the following story. She had formerly resided on the south bank of the Tay, in the County of Fife. One Sabbath evening her son, a mason, at that time employed on the north side of the river, said to his mother: "I am going to cross the Tay to-night, and be ready to start work in time to-morrow; it is so disagreeable going so far in these dark winter mornings." It was the first time he had proposed to use the sacred day for a secular purpose; his mother did not like it, but she held her peace. As he was getting ready for the journey the young man suddenly stopped and said:

"Mother, do you hear the water rushing?"

"No," was her reply: she heard no such sound.

Again he stopped and said, "Hush! do'n't you hear that rush of water?"

He went to the window and to the door, but found no sign of water. In that little cottage there were no water pipes, and there could be no rush of water. In vain his

mother affirmed that the sound was in his own ears: the young man declared he had never heard such a “mighty rushing of water.” His preparations finished, he set out; and that night he went down with the bridge into the “mighty rushing waters” of the Tay, and perished. Whether there be anything or nothing in presentiments or impressions without a known cause, we cannot tell: man has no line long enough to fathom the mysteries of the Universe. But this we do know: Mortal man is crossing a bridge that is sure one day to go down—the bridge of life; and it is wisdom to see that we are crossing on lines safe for soul and conscience as well as for life and limb. It needs no great quickness of ear to hear the sound of rushing waters—the mighty rushing waters of death and judgment; and he is the chief fool of time who does not prepare for eternity.

Some may call that broken-hearted mother superstitious; but her son’s mysterious impression and her own great sorrow had laid her at the feet of the Lord as with chastened spirit she reviewed life, and listened to the counsels of heavenly wisdom and grace. She now hears the sound of “mighty rushing waters” every day.

A mail guard whose duty it was to carry the letter-bags to Edinburgh and back, not only on ordinary days of the week, but also on every alternate Sabbath, was one morning preparing for church when he was summoned, though not in his turn, to cross the Tay in charge of the mails.

“Are you never to get to church with me?” asks his wife.

“I will give this up altogether,” was the guard’s reply.

He went, but never returned: he perished with the train. It was touching to see his little dog, day after day, all the

hours of the day and at night also, watching for the return of his master. There he sat, outside the door, as we saw him, peering into the distance; so absorbed as to take no notice of anything or any one passing. Those two little eyes so full of longing and wonder and pathos seemed to say, "O my dear master, why are you so long in coming?" Long and lovingly the poor doggie watched and waited; but his master never came. Did Christians only show the same loyalty to their great Master, and in like manner wait for His coming, how dead to earth and how mighty for service should the Church be! So it is in clouds of deepest shadow that the Lord many a time enters the house, as that sorrowful widow and her fatherless boys can tell. Where a majestic providence goes first, it is easy for the humblest servant to follow and serve.

One day* in the autumn of 1884, Dundee was shrouded in midnight darkness. At noon one could not recognize another at the distance of two paces: the gloom of the darkened heavens was more awful than the deepest night. The appearance of the sky betokened a tempest of portentous fury. The lightnings descending in perpendicular shafts lighted up the darkness with appalling vividness; and appearing at so many points in masses of flame, seemed about to lay the entire city in ashes. No one had ever witnessed darkness so phenomenal, and the boldest could not escape the dread of dire calamities. Many thought the last day, "the great day of the Lord," had come. In factories and other public works all hands were stopped. Many of the women were paralyzed with terror. Some were struck dumb with panic. Others were crying aloud to heaven for

* August the 12th.

mercy or begging their neighbours to pray for them. In striking contrast the Christian girls played a noble part. Comporting themselves calmly, they comforted one another and sang the songs of Zion in joyful anticipation of the coming of the King.

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid,
Therefore although the earth remove
We will not be afraid."

Their serenity, their holy songs, their words of counsel to the distracted unbelievers, their lofty courage—proved to be a testimony to the reality, power, and blessedness of true religion; which yielded good fruits at the time, and has ever since put to silence and shame the scorn of the ungodly. The impression, wide-spread and deep, furnished the Christian worker with a fine opportunity; and a goodly number of souls, it is believed, were saved.

At the hour of deepest gloom many were the incidents illustrative of human nature in its varied phases. One man, a scavenger, after surveying the heavens from the opening of a court where with others he had taken shelter, threw down his great broom with a happy, farewell dash, saying: "I am done with it!" and hastened away.

An old woman cried to her neighbours: "Oh, run and tak' my man oot o' the public-house; I would na' like the Lord to find him there."

A man was seen leaving a tavern, and as he hurried along the street, was noticed now and again to drop something in a furtive manner from his pockets. It proved to be a pack of cards, which he felt would be poor evidence in his favour at the Judgment-seat. Doubtless when that

dread hour arrives, there is much else in men's pockets that will need to be dropped; though such preparations will be rather hurried and late.

In one district of the town, largely inhabited by Irish Roman Catholics, many in their alarm sought a refuge in their beds, under beds, and in all manner of holes. In the public works, also, when the storm was past, not a few were found in strange hiding-places. So true to nature is the Bible, which tells of Adam hiding from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; and prophetically describes the wicked, now so bold in sin, as seeking a refuge in the last day in the bowels of the earth, calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the presence of God and the Lamb.

In the midst of the storm, Isabella called into the room where she was sitting with her husband her servant-maid, who, in the dread of coming judgment, was trembling from head to foot. Some time previously the girl had been awakened to a sense of sin, but her convictions halted. The terrible darkness was now preaching to her of sin and doom: every thunder peal and lightning flash increased her alarm, and the Judge seemed to be at the door. Her mistress spoke to her of the more awful tempest that burst on the head of the Redeemer, and pointed her to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It proved to be the hour of decision. The Lord Jesus came to her in the storm. Above the roar of the elements and the voices of her own terrors, she heard Him saying, "It is I: be not afraid!" She believed and rejoiced. The storm in her soul was changed

into calm ; and a consistent life has subsequently attested the reality of the change.

So, often have dark days led to bright lives. And on that memorable day in Dundee, when thousands of Christians, themselves enjoying “the peace of God that passeth all understanding,” raised their voices to heaven in fervent supplication for their terror-stricken fellow-citizens, and also earnestly entreated them to come with them to the place of refuge, it surely was not all in vain. To not a few the “Dark Day” was an epoch of the soul, and it will be a memory for ever ; for the Lord, they knew, was passing by.

CHAPTER XIV.

Leading.



OUR worker never aspired to prominence. Her faculty of persuasive speech, especially the fine pathos by which she could powerfully move the heart of an audience and unseal the fountain of tears, might have opened her way to a post of eminence; but she shunned publicity, and confined her meetings to little quiet gatherings of her own sex: she was "only a visitor." Even on her own field she did not aspire to lead; and yet she was a leader. Her enthusiasm touched a chord in warm hearts. Her zeal kindled zeal. Her courage and self-sacrifice inspired others; her loving, generous spirit found a ready following. With moving tenderness she frequently appealed to her fellow-Christians to come "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." In effect she was ever saying: "This way, friends! Down here they are perishing. Hush! don't you hear that cry for help! Quick, quick to the rescue! See, the Lord Himself is leading us on!"

"What drew you to her?" I asked a band of young women whom she led in Mission work.

"She was so real," replied one. The gracious soul instinctively turns to reality, as the flower to the sun.

"I can't tell what it was," said another "I just liked to

be with her." This power of attraction belongs only to the born leader.

"It was her lowliness," said a third; "she was always like one of ourselves." Meekness is more than mastery; gentleness can lead as well as genius.

"Once we had a little tea-meeting just to talk about the work, and each of us put something on the table," said another of the girls; "and she was so vexed we did n't invite her. 'I would have put something on the table, too,' she said; and there were tears in her eyes when she said it: she so loved us." Is there a nobler leader than love?

It is no mean service to enlist, organize, and lead, a band of earnest souls in the war with the devil and sin. Without the wise brave leader much Christian work is lost. She frequently took a young Christian with her to initiate her in visiting, and to inspire her with a passion for the work of seeking the lost. Here is an instance of her way with young disciples.

Miss — writes :

"After forenoon service, we had a cup of coffee in the vestry, and went to visit. We distributed tracts at a good few houses, which nearly all took from her with a smile. Some asked her to come in and talk to them; but others shut the door in her face when they saw who it was. She took these rebuffs quite calmly, and said to me, 'Perhaps they will take it next time.' She told me of one door at which she had never been able to gain admission. They were Roman Catholics, and would not listen to her. 'If they do not remove at this term,' she said, 'I shall get them to take a tract yet, I think.' After

her district was gone over, she took me with her to see a poor little girl who was dying. When we went in, the little girl was lying half asleep on a bed in a room not the tidiest, which smelt strongly of boiled vegetables. There were other two girls in the room, busily engaged in dressing their hair. They put chairs for us at the bedside. My friend took the child's hand in hers, and spoke gently to her about the Good Shepherd—how He died for us, and how He takes the lambs in His bosom. In answer to one of her questions, the child said she believed that Jesus died for her. 'Then you are Christ's little lamb,' she said; 'and you need not be afraid to die. Jesus will take you up in His arms and carry you home to be with Himself. Shall we sing a hymn?' We then sang, 'Whiter than the snow,' and after kissing her we left her.

"We then went to see an old Christian woman. She was very glad to see her kind visitor, who asked about her health, and listened patiently to all her small troubles and ailments, sympathizing with her, and saying, 'Poor body!' She then talked to her about spiritual matters, which the old woman seemed to enjoy very much. Before leaving we knelt, and she engaged in prayer. I remember being struck with the number of times she used the word 'Saviour' in it. It was now time for church.

"Another time she said: 'What about your deafness? Our Heavenly Father must have some wise purpose in sending it upon you. You'll try and bear it as coming from His hand, will you not?'

"'Yes, I do try to,' I replied.

"'That's right, A ——. What has become of the sweet-heart you had? Have you given him up altogether?'

"'Yes.'

"'Why?'

"'Because I do not think we could be happy together,

seeing he laughs at what I think of great importance: he does not believe in religion at all.'

“‘Oh, I am glad you have had the strength given you to say, “No” ; for you never could be happy for a life-time together. There is only true happiness when you have the same interests in life. You will never regret what you have done: the Lord will provide for you in some way or other. He says, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’ He will give you grace to bear what He sends, if you only ask Him for it.”

Abundant testimony is borne to her labours by her fellow-workers. Miss E. N. writes :

“She abounded in labours for the good of souls. From the day that she first came amongst us until almost the last day of her earthly pilgrimage she was never idle. At one time she was encouraging open-air meetings ; at another time planning house-to-house visitation.

“I remember, some years ago, it was laid upon her heart that something ought to be done for the lapsed masses that abounded in the vicinity of our church ; and she resolved she would go herself if some one of the Christian women would accompany her on a course of house-to-house visitation among them. It was my privilege to accompany her on a good many of those visits. Before going, it was her custom to repair to the house of a Christian friend near by, where, on bended knee, we sought help from on high, to enable us to testify for our Master. Week after week these visits were repeated, until she had been in every home in the district, and had spoken to almost every soul about death, judgment, and eternity.

“Nor was she content with that : she induced as many of the Christian workers as could spare time to unite in a

band, and go through the closes and sing hymns, in the hope that the sound of the holy strains might reach the ear of some one grown weary of a life of sin, and be the means of leading that one to Jesus, the sinner's friend. She has gone to her reward, but the work goes on; the Christian band are singing still, and eternity will reveal the results.

“She was often much exercised about the spiritual condition of the congregation; and, from time to time, she managed to gather the Christian women together for a week of prayer. Oh, *those hallowed moments* spent in that little room at the back of our church!—the remembrance of them sends a thrill through our hearts to this hour. It was good to be there; the Lord, on those occasions, was verily near, and we felt we had but to speak, and He would hear.

“Instead of taking the rest her enfeebled body required, she was ever ready to do her part in almost every phase of Christian work. Heedless of exposure to the inclemency of the weather, or its effect on a delicate constitution, she toiled on: out of doors or indoors, at open-air work or tract distribution, at our children's meetings or adult meetings, she was there speaking in solemn tones to some one grown old in sin; or, with beaming face, telling the dear little children of One who said: ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’

“The members of her young women's class will long remember the wise counsels she gave them. I remember on one occasion she said, ‘Oh, you young women who can sing well!—you don't know how much I envy you; how much better fitted you are to go and visit the sick than I am! How soothing it is to the shattered nerves of many a poor sufferer when they hear a sweet hymn

hummed in their ears by one who can sing well. There are many sick ones in our midst, and you have ample opportunity for laying your talent at your Master's feet, and saying with Frances Ridley Havergal:—

“‘Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only for my King.’

“She was ever ready with words of sympathy and deeds of kindness when any were in trouble. Her own acquaintance with suffering and weakness had been her best teacher as to how she might best comfort and cheer those who were suffering under the rod of affliction. By her kindly ways she endeared herself to us all; and her removal from amongst us has caused us to feel that a blank has been made in our ranks that can never be filled again.

“In December of 1887 a blood-vessel burst in one of my lungs, and I was brought all at once to the brink of the grave; my term of active service seemed to have come to an end, and I was saying with Elijah, ‘It is enough; now let me die,’ and was rejoicing at the thought of being so soon with the Lord. Dear Mrs. Simpson was the first to come to see me. She was then very poorly, and on several occasions said she thought her end was near. We had many sweet times together during those visits she paid me, and many of her sayings are fresh on my memory. At one time we were speaking of my health being so suddenly broken down, when she said: ‘It just showed that the Lord could do without the services of any one of us, and that He many a time laid us aside just to let us see that.’ At another time she said, ‘I do n't know if I could have done any more than I did when I was young and strong; but perhaps I do things better now that I do n't do so much. I may be wrong, but I have sometimes thought that in our youthful haste to serve we overlooked many of the *little*

things, and consequently they were left undone. So, E —, if the Lord is pleased to spare you longer, you will perhaps need to be content to do the *little things*, and let the stronger ones do the hard work.'

"Towards the end of May this year I was so much better that it was thought I might safely be removed to the country. I went to Mrs. Simpson before leaving, and found her very ill. She spoke tenderly of parting with those who were so dear to her; but, brightening up, she said, 'It will only be a wee, wee while, and we'll get home; and that will be so nice, won't it?' When I rose to go she said, 'I don't know how it is, but I can't let you away, somehow I feel as if I won't see you again.' She put her arms round my neck and kissed me passionately, and said, 'Good bye'; and I left, little thinking that the next time we would meet and the next conversation we would have would be in our home above."

Another fellow-worker, Miss S. M., says:

"I never shall forget Mrs. Simpson. Many a time have I got a blessing by her conversation; and many a time have we together visited the homes of the poor, the sick, and the dying. I have seen her in the Spirit and mind of Jesus ministering to their wants; and I can only thank the God of all grace for the grace bestowed upon her. She wielded a power wherever she went. Once when she visited my class, there being fewer present than usual, she said at the close, 'Now, girls, I don't see why this little room should not be full. There are plenty of girls that go nowhere: now if each of you would bring another with you next Sabbath—just tell Jesus about it.' We did tell Jesus about it, and the result was, one of the girls brought four with her next Sabbath. One of these four, a girl of fifteen, gave evidence

of the Spirit's work not long after, and before a year elapsed she fell asleep in Jesus. An hour before she died she said to me, '*I have Jesus!* I saw the angels this morning.' She smiled, and in a while passed away.

"About twenty years ago I received a great blessing through Mrs. Simpson. I was giving tracts on Bonnoethill, and inviting people to the meeting. It was the first time; I was alone; and being of a shy nature I very timidly approached a company of working men standing in front of a coal shed, and had just given each a tract, when Mrs. Simpson—then Miss Macpherson—came up and said, 'Have you invited them to the meeting?' Turning to the men she asked them if they were coming to the meeting, and they replied, 'No.' Then she said, 'Where are you going to spend your eternity? What ails you at the House of God? Would you not be better at the meeting, hearing God's Word, than standing out here in the rain? Nothing but pure love to your souls has brought us out. I, along with my sisters, have been out since five o'clock trying to get you people to come and hear the Word of God preached. We get nothing for our trouble here. We are wet, wet with the rain, and get nothing but scoffs from the world. But we will get a reward, and jewels for our Redeemer's crown. We have a prayer-meeting every day from two to three o'clock—praying for you people's souls: God hears prayer, and we'll get the jewels for the Saviour's crown.' Turning to one she said, 'Man, would it not be something if you could say, *I am washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and am ready to die?* If you could say that, you would not only attend God's house yourself, but you would be burning with zeal to bring others also.' The result was, several of them came to the meeting. Thus I got a great blessing in witnessing her faith and courage and self-denial; and it has proved a blessing to me ever since."

Mrs. M., another fellow-worker, says :

“Words are not at all adequate to express our estimate of Mrs. Simpson’s labours amongst us. She was so bold, yet so gentle and loving; so straightforward, yet so persuasive; so consistent in her life, so beautiful and humble in her walk and conversation.

“She was ever foremost in the work, ever urging us on to fresh effort, to more enduring courage. One Sabbath evening as we stood before the church door waiting for the open-air service, she said (pointing with her finger), ‘Look at these closes and alleys with their teeming thousands of perishing souls, and remember that the Lord requires their salvation at the hands of the Christian workers here. Oh, were each Christian here baptized with a fresh and powerful baptism of the Holy Ghost, how soon would this desert become the garden of the Lord!’

“Weak and suffering though she often was, she never deserted her post at the open-air work: she at least could sing,

“‘Fearing neither wind nor winter’s stormy blast.’

“Her place was at the minister’s side: she always held his hat. One very cold frosty night she checked him for giving out the hymn with his hat on. I remonstrated with her, knowing that he was subject to catching cold. She immediately retorted, ‘Nobody ever caught cold in the Lord’s work by preaching with his hat off: besides, it looks ill.’ She raised herself to her full height as she made this remark, and I just thought to myself she was a Macpherson all over. This may seem a trivial incident to relate, were it not that only a few Sabbaths after the occurrence one of our young men, Mr. A., now in China, was rated soundly by an Irish Roman Catholic woman while addressing a mid-day meeting in the Brick lands for the same thing. She told him that whatever opinion he held or wished to convey to

others about his religion, he did not seem to reverence it himself as he ought. Mrs. Simpson said to me at the close, ‘ Did you hear *that*? I wish more of our young men had been there.’

“ In earnestness and boldness she stood head and shoulders above every one of us. She would say to the young women, ‘ Rally round your minister, and sing with all your might.’ When the open-air meeting was nearing its close, she would slip away amongst the crowd, speaking to this one and that one about their souls; and by her sweet persuasiveness drawing many into the after-meeting. She had real tact and ready wit, which helped her much in soul winning; these gifts enabled her to answer many arguments, and overcome difficulties altogether insurmountable to the rest of us.

“ We had a long encounter with a number of rough lads who assembled at the opposite corner and defied all our endeavours to draw them into the meeting. Many a solemn word of warning Mrs. Simpson gave them; many a word she spoke for the Master. One day she singled out one better dressed than the rest. She tackled him about his soul, his Sabbath profanation, and his drinking. She asked if he was not ashamed of himself to stand there and smoke and spit within hearing of the sound of the gospel. He tried to turn the thing into ridicule, when she told him he was worse than a Hottentot; for he knew better, and was sinning against light and conviction. This offended the lad, who retorted, ‘ Will you please, ma’am, remember I was brought up when School Boards were in fashion, and learnt my lessons under their covering wings.’ With a look of irony I shall never forget, she replied, ‘ Young man, I am sorry for you: even the School Board has failed to improve you.’ Even these rough, uncultured lads have told me since, they are glad, now that she is gone, that not one of them ever gave her a bad answer. Who but

the Master can estimate her work amongst them? One thing is certain: a great change is effected even there; for these same lads, without a single exception, have become members of Mr. S.'s (an elder's) Bible class; and the chief among them, one too whom we had to oppose considerably, canvasses strongly among his associates for members to this same class.

“From time to time she conducted weeks of prayer. The meetings were solely for women. These were times of near access, times of refreshing, times when we got into the secret place of the Most High, and laid hold upon Almighty power and strength. Such was the power of prayer and of the Spirit's presence, that conversion work always followed. We look back on those meetings as green spots in the wilderness journey, and could in view of them say now, ‘Oh that I were as in months past, when His candle shined upon my head!’ (Job xxix. 2, 3).

“We knew well Mrs. Simpson's delicacy of constitution; but she was so willing to help us that we forgot for the moment her feeble frame, and taxed her to the utmost. If there was a wandering sheep to be reclaimed, a wayward soul to be brought in; if there was a doubting heart to be led to decision, or a sorrowing spirit to be cheered; if there was a dying one to be comforted, or a bereaved mourner to be solaced—she was the one to do it all. And when one saw her with a new light in her eye and a fresh mission to fulfil, running up and down the hill-side, it was no wonder we forgot her weakness—besides she looked so tall and strong. Oh, when shall we see her like again? On one occasion, along with me, she visited a dying woman. The husband of that woman was reading the newspaper. Oh, how solemnly she dealt with him! I do not know if he was afterwards converted; but he told me it was the last time he took a newspaper in his hands on Sabbath.

“Her life-work was charity. No one knows better than

my own family, who are engaged in Mission work, how much she gave. She was always appealed to ; not that her own purse was inexhaustible, dear soul. Her mission poor were always uppermost in her heart. What she gave away, and the sacrifices she made in order to give, will only be fully known when the ‘Well done!’ of the Master proclaims her deeds of charity to an assembled world. One or two instances may not be amiss here. On a dark stormy evening, she sent one of the Rose Street Mission workers to an old woman with five shillings from her. Not colder outside were the muddy streets than was the poor woman’s cheerless home. She was praying : her cry was for food and fire. The visitor gently taps, enters and gives the precious gift in Mrs. Simpson’s name. ‘Oh,’ said the old woman, ‘this nearly takes my breath away ; for I did not expect the answer so soon!’ ‘Oh but,’ said the visitor, ‘does the Lord not say that before you ask He will hear, and while you are yet speaking He will answer?’

“The same worker remarked to her once, how hard it was to visit a starving family without having it in one’s power to relieve them. ‘Ah, Mary,’ she replied, ‘that is the only time I ever wish to possess a fortune.’

“A poor deaf old woman manifested a desire to attend church and commemorate the dying love of Christ ; but she lacked suitable apparel. A bonnet was provided by one, a dress manufactured by another ; but a shawl was the puzzle. Mrs. Simpson being appealed to, she procured a black one ; but considering it too cold for the old woman, bought a new comfortable woollen shawl, and sent it. When it was presented, the woman, with a joyful exclamation, said, ‘Weel, weel, if the Maister promises that a cup o’ cauld water to a disciple winna lose its reward, what’ll He gi’e to Mrs. Simpson for a shawl like this!’ We cannot enumerate her acts of charity. Scarce a house she visited but she left a few shillings ; and so much did she value the feelings

of those poor people that she always appeared among them in her best clothes, for fear they might think she was slighting them in any way.

“Although she was constantly engaged in church work, she never neglected any home duty. She was a most affectionate and exemplary wife and housekeeper. Her husband’s comfort was her daily home ministry. She loved him with an intensity of affection which only strong natures like hers are capable of. I never saw one more careful to save her husband unnecessary trouble. Once I visited her house when Mr. Simpson was very ill, and his life had been in imminent peril. The crisis had just passed; but a chastened sadness still hung upon her sweet face, like the last traces of a great sorrow. She said to me, ‘Oh, that awful moment! I felt life would be nothing to me without him.’”

Mr. A——, now a missionary in China, writes :

“Perhaps more than others I knew how Mrs. Simpson laboured in district work. Sabbath after Sabbath she used to stand by my side at the open-air preaching. Her very presence cheered us in our district work. Often when not strong in body she was with us, in rain and in sunshine, helping in the singing. Often while the preaching was going on, she would enter the miserable homes, and have personal dealing with the people. Many of them, I know, valued these kind visits. It is impossible to sum up her labours. Eternity alone will reveal the great influence she had on the church and district. . . . Her place will never be filled. The people of the district will greatly miss her loving visits and acts of charity. Bonnethill has lost a true friend. No more shall these poor people listen to her gentle pleading to come to Jesus for rest. No more, alas! shall they hear her solemn warnings to flee from

the wrath to come. I also mourn over the loss of a kind, dear friend, a friend who prayed for me, a praying friend. Oh, it is a great loss! Long before I joined Bonneathill Church I made her acquaintance. Many a blessed talk did she have with me. The Lord did use Mrs. Simpson in helping me forward in the way of life and in the Master's service. I really found in her a *friend*. May some of the zeal she showed for the salvation of the lost fall on us all!"

It is interesting to notice how one conversion leads to another, and thus in turn each convert becomes in the best sense a leader. A single instance may be given. One night at a meeting on the street a woman was awakened. "I am a crimson-dyed sinner," she said. Conversion followed. She then brought with her a young woman, who also received the Word, and was saved. Not long afterwards that young woman, as she lay on her death-bed, sent this message to her friends at Bonneathill, "I am saved by a hair's breadth." These words became the title and theme of a tract which was sent in a letter to a ship-master's wife in Newcastle. The little message was used by the Holy Spirit to convey the saving knowledge of Christ to the ship-master's wife. Her husband, on his return from a voyage, was amazed at her conversion. At first he stormed furiously, because she had become "a revivalist." By-and-by better thoughts prevailed, and he too became an earnest disciple and a diligent worker. And now one of his sons is preparing for the work of the ministry. So far, the young minister is the last link added to the chain: but who will say it ends there?

CHAPTER XV.

Last Days.

FOR twenty-seven years our worker had laboured with unwearied industry and consuming zeal. Her share in the work of reclaiming those waste places was unique. To her was given, in the conversion of Helen Sharp, the woman who "cam' to Christ drink an' a'," to lay the first stone in the building. From the same quarry it was hers to lay many another stone upon the rising walls. Her example of heroic faith and self-sacrificing love inspired others. She always led the forlorn hope.

When the infant Mission was all but destroyed by dissension within and hostility without, she bravely stood in the breach and solemnly vowed that the work should not thus end. Joined in her noble stand by two or three like-minded souls, she saved the stranded vessel from total wreck. There was no part of the work, material or spiritual, to which she did not lend an efficient hand. There is no wall, or window, or door, or pew, in church or hall, which did not owe something to her prompt and strenuous effort. It was her joy, at length, to see a large and flourishing congregation gathered: the original nucleus of the one converted sinner growing to a church of five hundred communicants, with a staff of sixteen elders and deacons; four Sabbath Schools, with sixty teachers and

seven hundred scholars; an elder's Bible-class, attended by three hundred young men; bands of visitors; tract distributors; street preachers and other workers—a goodly “sacramental host” led by a devoted pastor, whose powerful ministry has been crowned with continuous success through twenty laborious years. To her it was given also to see the sons of the Mission Church, who always revered Isabella as a true *alma mater*, going forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty; some after the usual college curriculum becoming pastors of churches, others as accredited evangelists, occupying important spheres at home and in foreign countries.

In this work others laboured long, Isabella longer than any. Others laboured nobly; with Paul she might have said, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” Others gave much to the work, she more: she gave herself, her life, her all. But for her prayers and tears, her courage and patience, her magnanimity and love, it may be doubted whether this vigorous church, now pouring a flood of blessing on many a cheerless court and many a benighted home, should this day exist. It is the monument of a gentle woman's consecrated life. In reclaiming the moral waste she was recognized by her fellows as, first and foremost, the chosen instrument of God. She found a bog: she left it a field of yellow corn. When she went in, it was a den of lions; when she came out it was a fold of sheep. From the mire of the slums God gave her to rear a Palace Beautiful. The Palace Beautiful was first reared in her own soul, and the grace that made the worker also wrought the work.

For several years her health had been giving way. She was frequently laid aside by severe illness, and often rose from her bed in much weakness at the call of household duty or her loved work of winning souls. During her last two years life was a burden, work a battle. Many a time she paused at the bottom of long stairs and prayed for strength to ascend. Frequently brought to a standstill, sheer weakness compelled her to lean against the wall, as the light faded from her eyes, and her heart almost ceased to beat. When strength utterly failed her, she was wont to betake herself for a little rest to the house of a Christian woman in the district, where in fellowship she would pour out her heart in prayer with much weeping for the perishing, and then resume her work. Sleepless nights, days of prostration, seasons of acute pain or deep depression, became her familiar experience; but she refused to succumb, and bravely held on her way. Her growing weakness seemed to shut her in the more to the Source of all strength; her sufferings served to purify her zeal; her weariness caused her to long for home. "It is well with those who have got through with it all," she would say. To the older saints she sometimes cheerily remarked, "I think I will get home before you yet."

"My work is done," she said to a fellow-worker at the opening of the new Mission Halls, for the erection of which she had made a supreme and successful effort. This last labour, extending over many months of her last year of life, involved almost incredible self-denial; for she was dying all the time, and she knew it. But her great natural strength of will, heightened and sustained by Divine grace, carried her on. At the opening service her heart

overflowed with joy and gratitude to God, while also voices seemed to whisper that her work was finished and her warfare accomplished. So it was. Henceforth she went out and in as one who had received notice to appear in the presence of the King. Though to her, during the last months of life, work meant martyrdom, she pressed forward, “faint, yet pursuing.” In perfect truth she could say—

“ If I were told that I must die to-morrow,
 That the next sun
 Which sinks should bear me past all fear and sorrow—
 For any one,
 All the fight fought, all the short journey through,
 What should I do ?

“ I do not think that I should shrink or falter,
 But just go on,
 Doing my work ; nor change, nor seek to alter
 Aught that is gone :
 But use, and move, and love, and smile, and pray
 For one more day.”

In the month of April, 1888, feeble though she was, and suffering from disease of the liver with complications, she conducted a week of prayer. Those weeks of prayer had been seasons of extraordinary power. Often the Holy Ghost fell upon the assembled women. Again and again the entire assembly was filled with a sense of the Divine Majesty ; the glory of the Lord seemed to shine around them ; the souls of all were flooded with joy in the Holy Ghost, so that sometimes they could not sing for weeping. Those who were present say that the meetings marked a very notable epoch in their lives. They thus reached an elevation of holy communion far above ordinary altitudes—the effects of which remain in blessed memories ; in purified characters ; in power for service ; in deadness to the world.

This was her last week of prayer, her last great effort for God and souls. The meeting was composed of Christian young women whom she was training in the Lord's work. On each night there was a special subject of intercession : for themselves ; for the congregation ; for the office-bearers and members ; for the young men and young women's Bible-classes ; for the work ; for the evangelists, missionaries, and ministers of the congregation, at home and abroad—for every interest.

She began this week of prayer by saying : "Let us first put ourselves right with God." Then there were great searchings of heart. Fervently she counselled the habit of praying without ceasing, praying everywhere, always, about all things, if it were only a "Lord, help me !" The opening verses of Psalm ciii. were commented on, and the attention of the young disciples was called to the repeated "Who"—the personal Saviour ; to the riches of His grace in the *two alls* : "Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities ; Who healeth *all* thy diseases" ; and also the five spiritual blessings—forgiveness, healing, redeeming, crowning, and satisfying. Forgiveness, how good ! Healing, better still ! Redeeming, more and more ! *Crowning*—surely this is the best ! No, there is a better still : to be SATISFIED is more even than to be crowned ! Mark the order : first forgiveness, last satisfaction ; that is heaven in its very essence.

Her manner and tones assumed a more than wonted solemnity and tenderness ; as if the light of a near eternity were breaking in upon her. Her prayers, her words of counsel, her every movement seemed to glow with the fire of a holy love. Heaven was near—the Lord was there.

At times the silence, broken only by the sound of weeping, was so awful, that they were afraid to look up lest they should see a visible Presence too glorious for human eyes to look upon. She narrated to them an experience of which she had never before spoken. It was the story of her battle with the world, the devil, and self, some twenty-one years before. She described the tempting offers, the glory of the world with its vain parade; and how, after a long season of conflict, she one night obtained a glorious deliverance. The Lord came to her and showed her His own glory and the mansions of the blessed. The world's glory then faded from her view, and she became so enrapt with those bright disclosures, that she begged the Lord to take her home. The beauty of holiness so fascinated her soul that she could not brook the thought of returning to the world: she shuddered at the possibility of the slightest stain of sin, the faintest breath of evil; and she cried to the Lord, “Let me die! let me die!” But this was not His will; her mansion was not yet ready, she must tarry a little while. “Here I am still,” she said; “for twenty-one years I have been waiting for His coming and my going home.” Such was the sense of God's presence, and the power of her testimony as she stood, with her wonted gentle dignity, in the midst of her young sisters, and exclaimed, “Let me die! let me die!” the entire company broke down and burst into loud weeping. The longing for perfect holiness seized those tender hearts; the dread of sin found expression in groans and sobs; they would rather die than sin, and they desired to depart and be with the Lord. To hear those young Christians speak of that night, as they do with singular calmness and a tender

solemnity, is deeply impressive. "It will be to us," they say, "a memory to all eternity."

On another night the Holy Spirit again fell upon them in such power, that when they began to sing :

" Repeat the story o'er and o'er
Of grace so full and free ;
I love to hear it more and more
Since grace has rescued me ;
The half was never told, the half was never told,
Of grace Divine, so wonderful, the half was never told,"

they broke down with a joyous weeping and were unable to proceed. Such and so real is the presence of God in seasons of blessed, rapt communion. This experience, this vision of the glorified Lord on the mount gives way to other scenes and other experiences ; but a blessed effect remains—a calmness, a steadfast walking with God, a power in prayer, a joy in service, a heavenly purity, a dread of sin, a passion for souls, and a vivid sense of eternal realities, which contact with earth and earthly things is not able to impair. Fill the Church of Christ with men and women familiar with such experience of high fellowship with the Holy One, and the world will soon be ringing throughout with the "good tidings of great joy."

A few weeks afterwards, in the month of May, one Sabbath, despite her weakness and pain, she went to the morning fellowship meeting ; attended church forenoon and afternoon ; filling up the interval as usual with visits to the poor, the afflicted, and the unsaved. The weather was wet and stormy, and she returned home late in the afternoon in a state of utter prostration. That night her

husband was to conduct a service at which her presence was desired, and she bravely faced the rain and storm once more. It was “the last straw.” She returned wet, disabled, and ill, and lay down to die. During the remaining weeks of life she suffered much ; but in the midst of alternate acute pain and deep depression she maintained her habitual tranquillity and fortitude.

“ I am going home,” she constantly said.

“ It may be the Lord’s will to raise you up yet,” it was said to her.

“ Whichever way, what the will of the Lord is, to go or to stay, I am pleased,” was her reply.

“ There may be still some work for you to do.”

“ Were I to live,” she replied, “ I should do less work ; but I would try to do it better.”

Her love of Nature never left her. “ You may be able yet to go to Deeside,” it was said to her. “ Oh, it would be pleasant to die there and be buried among those glorious hills,” she replied. The nearer one is to God the dearer are His works. But the climbing of Craighdarroch and Morven and Lochnagar had now for her come to an end. The rambling among the birches and the heather in the Refrantrach was but a fading memory. The peaceful sauntering along the lily-bordered shore of Loch Kinnord, and the pleasant tea-making in the wood at Dinnet, where the Dee pours a crystal flood over its rocky bed, was past and gone for ever. She knew she never more would stand on the heights of Balmoral and feast the eye on scenery of entrancing loveliness, or roam in the corries in search of curious stones and rare ferns and white heather. To her all this was fast vanishing away. Other and untrodden

scenes were before her ; and yet she wished to die among the heather, and be buried among the mountains.

Her passion for saving souls continued to the last. Our servant was inquiring for her one day when Isabella called her into her room and spoke to her about Jesus. "I am happy, happy," said she : "take Christ, Jemima, and you will be happy, always happy !" The girl was deeply moved, and every day afterwards managed to find her way into the sick room. One Sabbath morning the dying worker lovingly embraced Jemima, and urged her with many tears to close with Christ. All that day the girl was in great trouble of soul ; at night she was enabled to accept Christ as her Saviour. Next day she went in and told her dying friend that she was now happy in Christ. Thus, in her greatest weakness the earnest worker received power to win another soul for God. So, too, the one was beginning the Christian course just as the other was ending it ; and it seemed as if grace and glory were touching and shaking hands.

As she entered the valley she encountered the great Adversary. About to be dislodged from the earthly tabernacle, she said to herself, "Where am I going? Am I to enter eternity a homeless wanderer? What if — — ?" Suddenly a rush of fearful thoughts swept through her soul ; her faith was submerged ; she was well-nigh overwhelmed. "You must go away, and you have nowhere to go to—and what then?" said the Tempter. The conflict was severe ; but victory came by faith. To a friend she explained how she came out of this darkness. "Twelve years ago," she said, "when our house was sold and we had no place to put our heads in, I was going about in search of

a house, but failed to find one. As I went along the street in great trouble I lifted my eyes to heaven, and dropt my poor little heart into God's great heart of love : then all my anxiety fled, and I was in perfect peace. Just so it has been now.” Death had marked her door ; she must remove—and where to? Again she looked up, “dropt her poor little heart into God's great heart,” and rested in the Lord. Finding the home of her soul in God, her terrors vanished : death would be but a flitting to the Father's house of many mansions. The enemy now left the field, and she had no more conflict. To her husband, on his return from the country after an absence of three days, she said exultingly, “Jamie, I am dying ; but I have great peace.” He was struck with the fulness of her assurance and joy. It was the victory of grace—manifest to all ; and it continued to the end.

To a minister's wife, a devoted Christian worker, she said, “I am triumphant ; this is salvation,” as if she had never known salvation before, so full was her assurance and so vivid her sense of the Saviour's love.

For each one of the many who came to see her she had an appropriate word. To one who was speaking too sternly of duty she said, “Remember, love is better than duty.”

To another, a young woman, she said, “Oh, M —, the world is unreal, it is false ; Christ is the great reality : get Christ !”

To another, “You have sacrificed yourself for God, and you will be far ‘ben’ in heaven. As for me, I am contented just to get in.”

To comfort friends weeping around she said again and again, "You know we must go one by one: it is God's way, *one by one, one by one*. Yes, it is hard to part; but then, you know," she added cheerfully, "it is only for 'a little while.'"

During her last days she often sang snatches of favourite hymns, and that too amidst acute physical suffering, and when her voice was feeble as a child's. Now and again, in tones sweet and low, she sang:—

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well with my soul."

At a point in her illness when medical opinion did not forbid hope of recovery, she had been removed to my house, not far from her own, in order to be nursed by her sisters. When the disease began to develop with unexpected rapidity, and there was no longer any hope, she expressed a strong desire to be taken back to her own house to die there. This wish was gratified. The kind hands of the physician and two other friends bore her to the ambulance, and she was laid once more upon her own bed. This was the last night of her life; and though she was in the last stage of weakness, very bravely, after her own old way, she nerved herself for the removal, and bore up with her wonted heroic spirit.

"Now you are home," said the doctor, cheerily.

"Yes, doctor," she replied, "and I am going to a glorious home."

Then warmly, though with faltering speech, she thanked the Christian gentlemen who had rendered this last loving

service. "God bless you all for it," she said; "God bless you now, and bless you in eternity."

In the silent hours of this, her last night on earth, she sang her favourite hymn—one she had often sung during those closing weeks of life:—

"To God be the glory! great things He hath done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son:
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the Life-gate that all may go in."

Again and again she sang this hymn, asking her husband to aid her in recalling the words and in giving them voice. This was the last effort of full consciousness.

Her thoughts had been occupied during those last days of life in tender solicitude for others—for her husband, her sisters, her brother, her servant, even down to minute details in regard to their welfare: the last beat of that loving heart was love. Even when the distance widened between her and us, as she went her solitary way into the valley, she looked at us tenderly as from afar, following with her eye our every movement. When we stood on the river's brink and her feet were deep in the waters, she kept peering through the gathering darkness as if she caught the far-away sound of a voice, while one of us repeated portions of Scripture, among the rest and last her favourite text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." When her voice was finally hushed, and the last gleam was fading from that winsome eye, by a movement of her lips she signalled a loving farewell to each and to all, and peacefully fell asleep in Jesus. This was on the evening of Monday, 9th July, 1888.

On Thursday she was buried in the Eastern Necropolis

of Dundee ; and on the following Sabbath a great crowd assembled in Bonnethill Church to solemnize the event, when a sermon was preached from Rev. vii. 14. It was deeply touching to witness the universal sorrow : it seemed as if everybody had lost a friend. "Such weeping," said an elder, "has not been seen in Dundee since the day when Robert Annan's funeral sermon was preached." From every quarter came sympathetic letters breathing admiration of her noble character, and bearing testimony to the grace that had been given her.

So passed away as sweet a soul as ever breathed. A more gentle spirit, a more gracious character, a more beneficent life it would be hard to find. Freely she received, freely she gave. For others she lived, loved, and laboured. When to bless others, meant for herself a cross, joyfully did she take it up ; and in her strong faith found it only "such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship." Rich and bountiful was her life, because she had learned how to love and to suffer. To her was given grace to touch everything with grace ; and all around a wide circle she left not a little of the beauty with which her Lord had arrayed her. With a step of heroic firmness she trod the thornier paths ; and although to us she seemed to die in the midst of her days, she lived a full term, seeing she not only won a crown for herself, but also mightily helped others to win crowns. To God be the glory !

CHAPTER XVI.

The Secret of Her Power.



THE source of all power in the Christian and Christian worker is—the Holy Spirit. But He is pleased to bestow and use a great variety of gifts as the channels of His influence. Every faculty of the mind, every feeling of the heart, every element of character, every organ of sense—become under the potent touch of His sanctifying grace a medium of His presence, a mirror of His light, an instrument in His service. The noblest character is simple; yet, the elements of its strength may be varied and complex. Many rills make the river. Simple as is the rose, who can analyze its beauty or guage the secret of its perfume?

From the bountiful hand of the Creator the subject of our memoir had received a large dowry. Her personal beauty was a gift of no mean value. A tall elegant figure; handsome features no less expressive of character than beautiful; warm dark eyes; a sweetly pensive air; blending with an open cheerful manner and a voice clear and rich in the kindest tones of the heart—made up a presence and a bearing at once dignified and winsome.

A sound judgment kept her on lines of prudence; strong common sense gave weight and direction to her sayings and doings—inspiring others with confidence, and carrying them along with her. A will that knew nothing of yielding to

difficulties was itself a tower of strength. Her fertility of resource was a purse of ready money for her own use ; a bank on which comrades in her life's work were accustomed freely to draw. Her quick sympathies and greatness of soul made her everybody's friend ; and to her it was given to win hearts for the Master simply by her wealth of affection, her faculty of loving. Unaffected simplicity and gentleness of manner disarmed prejudice, and not less than the vigour of her mind or the strength of purpose fitted her for impressing and leading others. Her frank genial bearing was a friendly letter of introduction, and such was the magnetism of her kindly nature that some confessed her presence to be a power even when she did not utter a word. Self-possession and courage, clear-headedness and capacity for close reasoning, made her strong in debate, enabling her to do good service in discussions with those who opposed the truth ; but her strength lay mainly in the logic of love.

Her mind was healthy, her character well-balanced. Strength and tenderness were the leading features. Sympathetic and brave, "she would weep at the sight of misery," as her servant said, "and yet be as bold as a lion." Her magnanimity and enthusiasm led her to take the heroic side and the forlorn hope. Often did she stand by the fallen when all their friends had fled. Fervent but calm, her earnestness was a white heat. Affable but not given to much talk, she held the reins of her spirit with a firm hand. Intensely spiritual, she was at the same time free from all morbidness. She could discuss a dress as warmly as a doctrine ; and weigh a method of cooking as seriously as a case of conscience. Habitually pensive, as if always looking beyond and seeing great things in the far distance,

she could yet be merry enough. Though the chord of melancholy, never wholly absent from the temperament of the Highland Celt, did vibrate with tender pathos in her secret heart, she ever kept a cheerful face to the world. Her ready wit, her joyous laugh, came as naturally as her breath, and as kindly as her tears; making no gap in her consistency, never marring her piety or hindering her prayers. An elder of the church paid her character a genuine tribute when he said: "She was a real saint, and a very womanly woman."

The ordeal through which she passed in 1866 greatly enlarged her spiritual capacity; purged her soul's vision; raised her to a loftier fellowship; and girded her with a holier strength. Deadness to the world, consecration to God, victory over self in its more subtil forms, singleness of eye, a consuming passion for saving souls—became thenceforth the outstanding features of her character, the determining factors of her life. One with Christ in mind, in will, in work—this is power, this was her power. In God's hands for God's ends—this is strength, and it was hers. She had learned to link her weakness to Omnipotence: she knew no other secret of power.

She was strong in faith. "Alas! my *little* faith in the *great* God," said a strong believer. To itself great faith always seems little. Conscious of her own weakness, our worker was strong in the Lord. Not trusting in feelings and frames, she rested on the Word of God, and was not left to waver. To carnal reason the Word seems bare: to her faith it was a rock, and a rock does not sink or shift because it is bare. Constantly feeding on the truth, and feasting her soul in fellowship with God, her faith was kept

lively and strong. She deliberately denied herself much pleasant reading, for which her keen intellect naturally craved; but what she thus lost in larger intelligence she gained in spirituality and power. Able in her later years to grasp the profound truth of God's sovereignty in man's salvation, the doctrine of election at which she once stumbled became a source of comfort and strength. Her faith becoming rooted in the divine purposes, she grew more hopeful and certain of success. On the line of God's counsels she knew she could not fail: the stars in their courses were fighting for the truth. Though sorely tried in her work, often baffled, often cast down, often in tears, she always maintained her confidence in God, and never doubted the power of Christ to transform the most corrupt villain in the city into a pure and gentle saint.

By faith she arrested the *arab* and the *rowdy* on the street, and compelled them to come in to the Gospel feast. By faith she contended with the infidel, the Sabbath-breaker, and the drunkard, and conquered them for Christ. By faith she sought the recovery of women lost to shame, and was enabled to raise them to decency and hope. By faith she entered dens of violence, quelled strife, and restored peace. By faith she carried the candle of the Lord into pits of darkness, and from eyes used only to vanity and lust chased away the mists of hell and the glammers of sin. By faith she made her way into foul garrets and fever-stricken cellars, and wearied not till grace transformed them into homes of comfort and health. By faith she took up whole families in their misery, and carried them in her bosom until they began to share her own life and happiness. By faith she conquered the love of ease,

sacrificed her pleasures and tastes, subjected her sensitive nature to cruel wounding; and despite bodily weakness and suffering, continued to watch and pray, to weep for sinners, and wear herself out before the time—and all to win souls and advance the kingdom of God.

Where love to Christ is the ruling motive, there is power. Our Lord's thrice-repeated question to Peter: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” followed by the reiterated call to feed the lambs and the sheep, is very significant. Not intellect, or learning, or eloquence, or courage, or the leader's skill, is the first and chief qualification for the work: it is simply love to Christ. We may “covet earnestly the best gifts”; but the “more excellent way” is *love*. In the repetition of the Lord's question what an emphasis is laid on love! What is the first qualification for the service of the Chief Shepherd? It is love. The second? Love. The third? Love—always love. Divine simplicity! It is as sound in philosophy as it is beautiful in character. Love to Christ puts us into full sympathy with Him; it keeps us near Him; it best understands Him; it makes the eye single and the heart loyal; it rightly represents Him to the world; it has most power with Him, and is the fittest instrument for Him to employ. Were the hearts of all Christians fully possessed by this holy and blessed affection, the effect would be startling: we should speedily witness the most glorious revival since Apostolic days, that time of love. To our worker the Lord Jesus was the sum of truth and duty, the centre of all her faith and service. To her the Saviour was so real and so near that she could speak of Him in a manner which in its very naturalness was touching and impressive.

“This I do for my Saviour,” was a secret she well knew. “Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart,” the Psalmist says; as if he meant, “Love and enjoy God, and you shall prosper.” “To enjoy everything in God, and God in everything,” is the spirit of love and the spring of power. If our worker toiled much to win souls, it was because she loved much. If her success was the fruit of her power, her power was the outcome of her love.

In the work of Christ prayer is power. With Isabella everything was a subject of prayer. In her private journals we find her praying about her “holidays,” and saying “not a step without prayer.” Again we find her making supplication about “debt on the Manse,” and entreating God to touch the hearts of certain trustees. So, too, she prays for others, not of her congregation, who are grappling with church debt, that the Lord would “fill their collecting cards.” In these prayers she is very definite, mentioning names and details the most trivial. All her work was begun and carried on with much prayer. Once when she was about to begin a Bible-class, her husband found her alone praying and weeping. She was not fit, she said, to undertake this service. Urged to try, she began with trembling; but soon her tears were turned to joy: the class became a great success. On one occasion she and her Christian sisters were so filled with the Spirit that she proposed to sing the hymn “Consecration,” upon their knees:—

“Take my life and let it be
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
 Take my moments and my days,
 Let them flow in ceaseless praise.”

The singing of the entire hymn upon their knees at a time when a flood of grace filled their hearts will be, as those then present say, a precious memory for life. Frequently, in secret, she enjoyed similar visitations of God; and many a time on the street—for she prayed as she went—a sweet surprise of grace in answer to her cry, filled her soul.

Her power in prayer produced a striking effect upon the ungodly. In houses she visited, when her message of love was drowned in the tumult of angry or profane voices, she seldom failed to obtain silence and attention by prayer. “Down, down upon your knees and honour your God!” she would say with a commanding voice. Then one and another of the most hardened sinners would be shamed or awed into kneeling, as with majestic tones she insisted on compliance with her demands: nor would she begin until all present had put themselves into the posture of worship. To get those persons down on their knees who had never knelt before, face to face with God for the first time, was a point gained. For such careless souls it was an awful moment, a memory that clung to them. When all was hushed, she was wont to pour out her heart in a strain of deep solemnity and melting tenderness, herself weeping as she humbly begged of the merciful God salvation for every soul. Some who were much with her say that such was “the majesty” of her prayers, and the powerful impression thus made, that persons unused to this rose from their knees pale and trembling, as if they had been at the very Judgment-seat of God, or were about to pass into eternity.

Her weeks of prayer were seasons of extraordinary power

and blessing, spoken of by the women present as "everlastingly memorable." At the close of the meeting, her husband sometimes found the women kneeling or sitting on the floor weeping, herself like a prophetess standing in the midst of them. "My *praying* friend," a fellow worker, now a foreign missionary, called her. Her praying made her a real friend to many. "Down, down upon your knees, and honour your God," has become a saying and a household word among her fellow-workers and friends.

She was candid in pointing out the faults of others, and equally frank in acknowledging her own. When the young preacher, who some years afterwards became her husband, was beginning his mission work at Bonnethill, he was called upon to address a meeting in her district. With a desire to show what she could do as a visitor, she plied all her gentle arts to get the people out, and there was a crowded house. The preacher was not in a happy frame; his tone was harsh; and the meeting was a failure—and so far the work was injured. As they left the meeting she said to him, "We have both sinned—I by seeking to please you; and you by pleasing yourself: and God might justly send us both to hell this night." Crestfallen and humbled, for he felt the rebuke was just, the preacher made his way to his lodging, where, alone with God, he confessed his fault; and realizing sin, the wrath of God, and eternity, as he had scarcely ever done before, he received a special blessing and preparation for his work. To climb a hill we must begin at the bottom. Some fail in the work of God because they do not start low enough. The preacher who can meekly accept a cutting rebuke from whatever quarter it comes is

not far from God. The worker who can put her own vanity to death is sure of success.

Though she was the gentlest of the gentle, her courage was dauntless. She never hesitated to say or do what she believed to be right. One Sabbath morning she observed a squad of men at work. Addressing the gentleman in charge, who was a stranger to her, she politely asked him if he knew the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The reply was courteous, but unsatisfactory. A conversation followed, in which both held their positions. Failing, she drew her bow at a venture and said, "Is that what your mother taught you?"

"No," was the reply.

"Then, which is the better way, your mother's or yours?"

After a pause he replied with much feeling, "I frankly confess my mother's way and yours is the better way." So saying, he courteously thanked her, and ordered his men to stop working. Thus the quiet of the Lord's Day was restored.

In like manner she spoke to many others in the streets and elsewhere, warning them against the sin of Sabbath desecration. She visited the shops open on the sacred day, and with earnest, loving words dealt with the offenders. Some received her in silence; some promised amendment; others denounced her fiercely and turned her to the door. "They ordered me out," she said; "but I would not go until I had delivered my message. I left *the death warrant* with them, and then came away."

Bravely did she bear reproach for Christ. Standing at the street corner with Robert Annan and other open-air preachers, she was many a time pelted with soot, flour, and

mud ; and sometimes in the scuffle had her dress torn. When we were assailed in the Baxter Park by a mob carrying sticks which they freely used, she was struck down by my side, and borne home as one dead. This only nerved her for more heroic effort, and she had the joy of seeing three of the ringleaders in that assault brought to Christ. "That blow," said one of them after his conversion, "has been a heavy one for me ; it has often since then recoiled on my own head." One night at an open-air meeting, she and her fellow-workers were assailed by a rowdy band of Roman Catholics carrying on poles long ropes of burning tow. At a given signal the assailants extinguished the street lamp by means of a concealed string prepared beforehand, and rushed upon the little band of workers, hurling the masses of blazing tow among them. In the darkness of the night the advance of the fiery host, yelling like demons, had a terrible, even diabolical, aspect. "Let us stand firm," said Isabella. They stood firm, and the enemy left the field completely vanquished.

She did not force her way : with energy she combined discretion. To break door or window in order to enter the house, she knew, is not the way to make friends. There was no harshness, no noise, no patronizing airs. Gentleness prevailed : nobody kicks a bleating lamb. Few sinners that have not finally broken away from God can utterly resist a sunny, gracious manner. Knowing human nature, she could hold her peace and bide her time. When received with a fierce outburst of rage, she remained silent and serene. She knew a reaction would set in ; the storm would be followed by a calm ; the savage temper would give place to a kindly recoil ; and then her opportunity would

come. Sometimes she let people severely alone. J. W., a godless old man, who lived a solitary life, his only companions being a lot of fancy birds, resisted all her efforts to lead him into a better way.

“What will become of you, James,” she said to him one day, “if you die in your sins?”

“Oh, I suppose I’ll gang to hell,” replied the old man with a sneer, adding in mockery, “Will the birdies gang to hell too?” This ended the visiting for a long time.

One day she met old James, who with a touch of sadness in his voice said, “Hoo is it that ye never hunt me up noo, Miss Eesabell?” This was a fine opening—the opportunity she desired. The doors into human souls are many, and it needs no little skill to use the right key. Our worker did not scruple to employ her wit with the sceptic, and by raising a laugh at his expense win a victory for the truth. But whether it was humour or pathos, argument or rebuke, her intuitive perception of the situation and tact contributed not a little to her success.

Perhaps the most marked feature of her character was generosity. She was kind-hearted to a fault. It was her joy to give: she was always giving. She often gave all she had, thereby reducing herself to straits, and thought nothing of it. But it was not for the mere luxury of giving: she used her deeds of kindness to open doors for Christ. Many a time she brought home several copies of the same evening newspaper; and in explanation would say, “Oh, if you saw how happy it makes those poor children who sell the paper to buy one, especially when they see that you want to encourage them!—besides, it gives one a chance of speaking a word to them.” In this way she got hold of them.

Sending to a niece a brooch she says: "Dear A——, these stones are real. I like real things. As they are real they sparkle. I hope you will be like these amethysts in being a real gem in Christ's crown." Her quick sympathies carried her to the side of the suffering and the poor. Without any stooping she got down beside them, and was the loving sister of any poor creature that needed love. She had "dropt her own poor little heart into God's great heart of love," as she said; and to induce any sufferer or sinner to do the same she reckoned no sacrifice too great. The Son of God gave Himself: a gracious bountifulness of heart is in the line of His sacrifice; and the Holy Spirit is wont to employ in winning souls a Christ-like generosity of spirit and practice. In power for good, next to God's grace to man comes kindness—man's grace to man. "Now abideth faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love."

One Sabbath morning when on the way to an early fellowship meeting, she bethought herself of visiting an aged bed-ridden woman. Having nothing to give her, she suddenly remembered she had a lemon in the house, the only comfort she could carry her. Back all the way home she went, put the lemon in her pocket, and after the forenoon service in church paid the visit. To the question, 'How are you to-day?' Mrs. G. replied:

"Oh, Mrs. Simpson, I have been wishing very much I had a lemon, and I have been praying that God would send one to me."

"Well, Mrs. G., God has answered your prayer: I have brought a lemon to you." This answer to prayer was more than many lemons to the suffering believer: it was fruit from Paradise.

Kindliness in speech and manner often goes a great way. One day she came upon an old woman in a miserable hovel filled with smoke. Surprised, the woman said, "Oh, I wonder that a lady like you would come to see a poor creature like me in a smoky house." "We are all poor creatures," was Isabella's reply; "but don't you know that Christ died for *poor creatures*?" The old woman was deeply touched, and tells this little story with tears.

She trained her young assistants to follow her own example, and dress well when visiting. "It pleases the poor people," she said; "they think they are honoured by it. They don't like to be helped by persons as poor as themselves. The threadbare dress seems to them to mean a threadbare religion."

In visiting the manner in which she introduced herself was kindly and winning. After knocking and receiving the invitation to enter, she was wont to open the door a little and thrust in her head, with a singularly warm and apologizing look, as much as to say, "You see who it is: don't let me take you by surprise; if you are not ready for me I won't trouble you just now." Her purpose in this was to convey the impression that she reckoned admission a personal favour: and so the kind feeling thus called into exercise toward her would be the opening of that inner door which it was her main business to enter. The people frequently speak of that loving, beseeching look. It was a very little thing; but it was not more genial than it was wise and Christ-like. The work of God needs a fine touch; the soul of man calls for delicate handling. It is the very gentleness of Christ's touch many a time that reveals its divinity and proves its omnipotence. In the spirit of the Master's

lovingkindness the wise disciple, the successful worker, will ever follow. To reach a heart, beg a favour: to win a soul, be a debtor.

Humility crowned her character. A favourite text of hers was, "My soul shall make her boast in God." She was always the "poor sinner and nothing at all." She took the lowest room. Her face shone, but she "wist not" that it shone. You would never learn from herself that she had done any work for Christ. She refused when urged by friends to publish a narrative of her work, though in its details it would have read like a romance. For good done in which she was the chief instrument she loved to give others the credit. In the battle ever at the forefront, in the triumph she was always at the rear. Her practice as well as her song was,

"To God be the glory, great things He hath done!"

With another she could say, "It is my grief that I have done so little for Christ; but it is my joy that Christ has done so much for me." She served the Lord "with all humility of mind, and with many tears." "Oh to be nothing, nothing, only to lie at His feet!" was her habitual frame. "Down, down with self, and up, up with Christ!" was still her cry; so she was blessed in the work: "Them that honour Me I will honour." The proud soul is a thorny stick, a sword without a handle: who can use it? The lowly mind fits well the Master's hand: it is His wont to use the meekest most. The test is, not how great can I be for God but how little? He who takes the lowest room is fit for the highest service. The worker who is content, if it be the will of God, to glean

straws for Christ, the Lord will promote to honour; one day, to his glad wonder, he will find that his poor gleaned straws have been transmuted into a crown of glory.

In a warm tribute to her memory placed on the records of the Kirk Session, the elders of Bonnethill Church, among other features of her character and work, make special mention of her self-denying and disinterested spirit. "She was one of the most earnest workers," they say; "but much of her work was of such a nature that whilst most self-denying and incessant, it did not come very much before public notice. It was done for the Master, and for His approval alone. She was an indefatigable visitor in the district; and in the homes of the poor and the sorrowing her presence was helpful and cheering. She carried the gladness of a consecrated Christian life where-soever she went. And not only did she do good work herself, but she was the means of inducing others to join in this; and her example and devotion were such as to give much encouragement to her fellow-workers." In her contentedness to work out of sight she might have truly said:—

" My crown is in my heart, not on my head ;
Not decked with diamonds nor Indian stones,
Nor to be seen : my crown is called Content,
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy "

She would go out in a stormy night, and walk through muddy lanes and courts, only to carry a comfort to an old woman in a garret, or to persuade a young man to attend a Bible-class not her own. She was happy not only in winning a soul, but also in doing the drudgery necessary to put a sinner in the way of being brought to the Saviour

by a fellow-worker. It was the soul she saw, not herself: the salvation of the sinner was everything, her own honour in the business nothing. When standing on the street with vulgar open-air preachers and factory girls, or marching and singing in the midst of them, she appeared foolish enough to some; and genteel acquaintances, who thought she was only making sport for the rowdies, "passed by on the other side." The poorest of those that love the Lord were her dearest friends. With refined tastes and exquisite sensibilities, with a fascinating presence and a gracious winsomeness of manner that would have made her a favourite in fine society, she preferred for Christ's sake to mingle with the poor, and be as one of them. Rather than cut a figure in high quarters, she would be "oor freen, Eesabell," in the slums. Vanity in every form she abhorred. When a silly girl refused to carry a parcel, she said: "I would not be ashamed to carry a tub on my head down the street: we should be ashamed of nothing but sin."

Her faults were chiefly those of a too frank hater of all meanness, hypocrisy, and sham. Her great plainness of speech did sometimes give offence. But in her severity there was no bitterness: her kindness kept her candour in good company, and an admirable prudence tempered the sharpness of her reproofs. At the worst, her outspokenness and indignation, like a mild thunderstorm, only frightened the timid, hurt nobody, and cleared the air.

She was a true Christian worker. After a manner like her father, she was a maker of roads and bridges: roads for bewildered wanderers; bridges for storm-staid wayfarers; straight paths for the lame and the blind. Stationed near

the Cross, like all genuine workers for Christ, she began work there and ended it there. In Christ and Him crucified she beheld the most glorious revelation of God, the most beneficent monument of His power and His love. In the Cross she saw the death of sin, the door of salvation, the ladder to heaven, the hope of our race. In its light and shadow she also saw two coming eternities. Between the lines of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, she read not only a personal title to everlasting life, but also a clear call to be a fellow-labourer with the Lord Almighty in working out the blessed purposes of redemption.

In the risen Saviour and the gift of the Holy Spirit she perceived power enough to convert men, conquer devils, and save a perishing world. With the light of eternity in her eye she saw the true meaning of things. Beneath the “purple and fine linen,” beneath the tatters of tagrags, she saw God’s broken image, splendid even in its ruins; and she would rather win a soul than a fortune, she would rather save a sinner than rule an empire. Glory to God she saw was the grand success; and so it was her glory to sell her own glory for the glory of Christ. She could postpone her reward till the day of judgment: the pinnacle of fame for her was the Master’s “Well done!”

Her right hand and her left were prayer and pains: she prayed that she might work, and worked because she prayed. She crucified herself for the love of those who would have crucified her; and she became as rubbish to the very rubbish of mankind—if by any means she might save some. Knowing the plague of her own heart, she was pitiful towards the fallen. While the joy of the Lord was her strength, she cherished a broken heart,

because she found it the one thing the devil cannot seduce; the one thing in the Universe that comes nearest to being omnipotent. Poor herself, she was bent on making many rich; and was commissioned by heaven to do that very thing. Familiar with the weight of other people's burdens and the bitterness of their sorrows, she was a saint with the saints; a poor sinner with the poor sinners; all things to all for the love of Christ and them. In prayers and watchings, in heart agonies and tears, in reproach and rejection, in hard work and hot battle for God and souls, she found her meat and her drink.

As a Christian and a worker, she was the creation of the Holy Ghost: apart from sovereign grace she was nothing—and she knew it. Like all other true workers she had learnt that secret of self-sacrifice in which real strength lies. Her little all she laid in love at the feet of her Lord, and He blessed and multiplied the slender store. A magnanimous, tender-hearted woman went forth in a wise and patient endeavour to aid the suffering and the erring: God did the rest. Her energy and wisdom, her gentleness and generosity, her patience, her prayers, her tenderness and tears, made up a character of equal strength and beauty; but that was only the earthen vessel holding the divine treasure: the excellency of the power was of God. She wept for her dead brother; and Jesus wept with her and raised the dead.

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