INTO THE LIGHT

MAUD · JEAN · FRANC
To dear Clarice
with love from
Marian
January 28
1904
INTO THE LIGHT.
BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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MARIAN; OR, THE LIGHT OF SOME ONE'S HOME.
INTO THE LIGHT.
THE MASTER OF RALSTON.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY, Limited,
St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, E.C.
INTO THE LIGHT

BY

MAUD JEAN FRANC

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

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

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PART I.

INTO THE LIGHT.

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

CHAPTER I.

LIGHT'S DAWN.

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

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

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

"I suppose I shall not be wanted just yet," I answered, rather hesitatingly, though I gladly responded to his invitation in my heart.
“Wanted? No, of course not—only by me, and I’m one of the children, please to remember, Miss Bessie.”

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

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

We sat down on a rocky boulder underneath the willow, side by side, with the water at our feet, and the moonlight trembling fitfully through the gracefully-sweeping branches. How still it was—we could hear our own breathing—though, as we sat there in silence, other sounds mingled with it—the chirp of the grasshopper, the croak of the frogs, the crying of the night-hawk, and now and then the dismal hooting of some distant owl. It was all so delicious, we
scarcely wanted to speak. We were resting—both of us—I with my head in its old place on my brother’s broad shoulder, he with one arm thrown over the rock, the hand of the other holding mine in a warm clasp.

“Do you like it here, Bessie? Does it rest you?”

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

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

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

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

“I am sure I don’t,” I answered, leaning forward and laving a slender strip of willow that hung low to
and fro in the waters. "I do not know exactly what it is I am weary of—everything, I think, but you, Sid!" I continued, suddenly loosing the bough, which bounded back to its place, sprinkling us with a tiny shower. "I do not see why you should feel so—you who are so good and strong."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What can we do, Sid?”

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

We neither of us in those days knew anything of Bunyan’s Pilgrim, or how he lost his burden, at the foot of the cross. Indeed, how should we? Life had
hitherto been to us like the brook in the shadow of the wood—it came out of the shadow into the sunshine at last, and so we were coming slowly, creepingly yet, here a little flickering of light, there a gleam through the shadow coming from above us, uncertain and flickering, it is true, but a sparkle of the true light that leadeth to everlasting day.

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

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

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

My thoughts were in a maze. It was all so strange. Words uttered during a casual visit by a stranger's lips, a stranger we might never see again, had suddenly brought a darkness into our lives; or rather, a ray of light revealing the darkness that had before existed
—only we had not known it. "Flee from the wrath to come" seemed echoing in our ears, but we knew not whither to flee.

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

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

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

"Do you think we might learn more about it from the Bible?" I hesitatingly asked. "You know, Sidney, dear, it is the Bible that is read in church,
and what that old man told us he said was all from the Bible—God's Word he called it."

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

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

CHAPTER II.

MORE LIGHT.

Early as it was when Sidney left home next morning, I was up and in the old dining-room, ready to pour out his coffee for him, and pay him any other little attentions that he needed. We had no chance of saying anything to each other, for Gussy was breakfasting at the same table, and young Miller, from the next farm to ours, and he had the most of the talk, as he generally has. He is always so full of
life and spirits, it is impossible for any one to be dull long in his presence. "He comes in with a laugh, and goes out with a roar," so Gussy says; and I verily believe he is right, for he is so funny that his auditors have to "roar," whether they will or not.

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

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

After all, I found he had not forgotten, for as they mounted their horses and rode away, he turned back:
to the fence against which I was leaning, and, stooping towards me, whispered,—

"Don't forget, Bessie."

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

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

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

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

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

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

John’s gospel! What did I know about John? There was a fine old engraving hanging up in our sitting-room, in a massive curious old oak frame—a sort of heirloom in the family. I know my mother had prized it for that reason, and we children were accustomed to look at it with a kind of reverence. It was the three apostles—Peter, James, and John—and the artist, whoever he was—I don’t know that I ever heard his name—had caught the character of each, and the three heads stood out life-like from the frame. It was John’s face, however, that I was never tired of looking at. There was something in his large, deep, earnest, loving eyes that fascinated me, even when I was a child; and I remember being told once when very little—so little that I was lifted in
some one's arms to look at the picture—that that was the "disciple whom Jesus loved." I never forgot it; nor another old tale that I heard about the same Apostle when he was very old—so old that he could only be carried amidst the congregated Christians—how he used to spread out his hands and simply utter the words, "Little children, love one another." Day after day the same old tale of love. He might well have those eyes. Ah! thought I, I will read all he has written. I will begin with him—"In the begin­ning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I did not comprehend it, but read on and on in a mist—the same verses over and over again. John was a witness—of whom? Of the Light. The true Light. But who or what was this Light of which John witnessed? "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Was it indeed Christ of Whom John spake? and I glanced up at the heading of the chapter—"The divinity, humanity, and office of Jesus Christ." I had not noticed that before, and read once more with increased interest till I came to the words, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

This is what Sidney and I wanted—this power; and He—Christ—gives it to those who believe in His name. Yes, I could see that, we must believe in Him to ask. "It seems all very right and natural, but oh, so difficult!" I sighed as I closed the book and sat dreamily considering the words, my elbows on my knees and my face in my hands. God seemed so
far off in those days, I could not realize that any prayer of mine could reach His ear. And yet I could not give it up. I had found out that I was a sinner, and I wanted to get rid of my sin; but this asking—oh, this asking!—it seemed so strange.

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

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

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

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

Already as I passed the door of their room there was an outcry for Bessie. Maude, and Lilly, and Alley were in different stages of dressing; they all wanted a little aid, chiefly in the arrangements of their hair, for Maude was only eleven. But it was the two little boys, Freddy and Lennie, who claimed my immediate attention. They were anxious to be up and dressed, and meanwhile were engaged in a hearty game of romps with their pillows. This
would never do. Mamma's morning nap would be disturbed, and papa would feel annoyed. So I coaxed them out of their romps, got them quickly dressed and washed, and sent all five out for a run in the fresh morning air before breakfast.

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

THE LIGHT IN A CLOUD.

It was a very busy day that followed my early morning in the orchard. I had double duty thrust upon me; for after breakfast, just before I went into the schoolroom, Ernest Merton, my brother-in-law elect, came and took Jenny off for the whole day, so our
teaching was of a very desultory nature. I was called away so many times, that at last it became necessary to give up the attempt altogether, and then I really think it was worse, for mamma's head was bad, and she could not bear the least noise; and it was almost impossible to restrain the wild young spirits. What could I do? My own head began to ache badly before the day was half over, and I felt harassed, and worried, and grieved—all in one.

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

I was lying on the sofa, with water on my forehead and smelling-salts at my nose. My father was bending over me and Jenny bathing my head. "Why, Bessie, my girl, how is this?" said my father, gently putting me back as I attempted to rise.
"My head!" I faintly replied. "I will go to bed, if you please, papa."

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

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

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

The house quieted down after a while. Jenny came in to see if I was better or needed anything, and then she too went off to bed, and a great stillness
fell over everything—on that stillness the pain in my head gradually died out, but even then I could not sleep. I did not want to sleep, but lay with wide-open eyes, looking out upon the clear soft sky and its gleaming stars, upon the leaves shimmering in the moonshine, and involuntarily the words of David's grand old psalm came into my mind—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bessie!"

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

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

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

"Oh, but I can get up now." I was feeling weak still, however, and a little throb of pain came to warn me that my head was not quite recovered.
"No," said Jenny. "Papa says you are to lie still and take your breakfast, and that I am to see you take it. You are very pale, and I think he is right."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Are you really? Oh, Jenny!"

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

"Yes," I answered, and I suppose wearily, for Jenny quickly added, "You need not worry about that though, for we are to have extra help. Papa
says you need a rest, and you are to have it. And now for the other half of my tale. You are to change this work, Bessie—to take my place and get a chance of going about a bit. We are going to have a governess for the children. Papa says it must be done; and, as I said before, I think he is right."

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

"What is the matter with me?"

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

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

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

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

"I am afraid she is going to be ill, poor child," I
heard him say, as he passed out of the room, followed by Jenny. "She is decidedly feverish."

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

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

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

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

"Sidney," I faintly answered, "God is mindful of us. Do you not know that?" It was all I said intelligibly, for I rambled off again; but the words from my fevered lips came with double force. He went away, with tears choking his utterance—away
to his own room, where he threw himself on his bed, with one cry on his lips,—

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

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

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

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

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

**CHAPTER IV.**

**POINTS OF LIGHT.**

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

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

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

"Bessie, darling, you are better."
"Have I been ill? and, Jennie, did they tell me you were married?"

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

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

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

"Sid!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so we remained for a little hand in hand—not speaking. It was satisfaction enough for me to feel that he was there, and that from some strange mysterious distance I had come back to him; that there
was something we had yet to do together, and that now it would be done. I was not very clear what, I had almost forgotten, for I suppose my mind was yet weak, but the thought, uncertain as it was, brought peace with it. A little point of light seemed to steal upon me through the mental darkness, and I lay still, with a sense of coming brightness upon me.

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

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

There followed many pleasant days—days of convalescence, when it was a pleasure to recline in the large easy chair, which had been wheeled for me into the bow window of the dining-room, and there to sit dreamily, looking out into the garden with the jessamine fragrance blowing in upon me, and the refreshment of green leaves everywhere. It was summer still, but the great heat had spent itself, and the soft cool breeze played freely among the vine-leaves that clustered round the window. The very choicest
fruits from the orchard, the tenderest chickens from the farm, all dainty things to tempt the appetite which was gaining strength every day, were mine. In my life I had never been so tenderly cared for before.

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

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

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

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

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

"But he is right, Jenny, dear," I answered lowly, shaking off the tears. "He has been good to spare you, and you mustn't mind me a bit. I am getting well now, you know; you needn't wait."
"Ah, it will do him good to wait," laughed Jenny. "There is plenty of time, so don't let it worry you, darling. We have to be thankful that you are getting well so nicely, after all this long illness."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yet you did pray?"

"Yes, I could not help myself; I had to. I could not give you up, dear, I wanted you so much. All that we had talked of—all that we were seeking—
came before me. I could not do without you; and the doctor gave no hope, or very little. I was obliged to pray, if that indeed was prayer. I am half afraid of it, now I think of the way in which it was done."

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

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

CHAPTER V.

ONE RAY MORE.

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

The room had another charm to me—its large, bow window—not like the dining-room, however—for the window here opened in the French fashion, like doors, on to the prettiest part of the garden—a
sloping lawn, flanked by beds of flowers at this season of the year. Chrysanthemums in endless beauty, and gorgeous verbenas were rife. Some of the bushes were like wreaths of snow, and were a splendid contrast to the green velvety lawn. Bulbs there were, but few had at present put forth an appearance; but the mignonette, which clustered thickly here and there, made the air very sweet. A row of poplars bounded the view, and shut in this little snugger on one side—monthly rose-bushes, mingled with furze, grew on the other. Beyond all was a glorious peep of the hilly range, steep and blue in the distance. It was a pleasant little room for an invalid to get well in, and I think it certainly helped in the progress.

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

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

As I grew strong I was, of necessity, left very much alone. My nurses needed recruiting after all their weary nights of watching. Mary was sent away for a holiday to her friends, and a woman engaged for a short time in her place, and Ernest carried Jenny off at every opportunity, and I was glad for her to go. She wanted taking care of after all her care for me, and she got it.
And I, of necessity, was, as I said, very much alone, for Sidney, though he would have liked to keep me company, was under the necessity of being away, as papa was absent from home. The days sometimes seemed very long, especially as for a time I could not amuse myself with work, and was too weak to read much. When I could read, time went rather more quickly, and I was less weary.

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

Sidney was sitting with me one evening a little later on. I sat up longer in the evening then, for I was much better, and less inclined for bed. It was rather chilly, and the windows were closed and the curtains drawn, and the light of the large lamp with its frosted globe was pleasant. A bright little morsel of fire shone and sparkled on the hearth to remove the chill, which I felt more, I suppose, because of my recent illness. The large chair was wheeled before the fire, and I reclined luxuriously in it, with my feet on a footstool and my hands in my lap, for I was tired of reading and walking, and ready for nothing so much as a quiet talk with my brother.
He was tired, too. He had had a long day, overseeing his men about the station, walking and riding here and there, and was getting rather anxious for papa to come home. "There were some things that were going wrong," he said, "and it was clear enough the master was wanted."

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

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

"And will papa and mamma like it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Were they? I do not remember. I know it
seemed so grand that the high and mighty God
should take thought or care for us; and yet that word mindful must mean this. Then the other day I came across some words of John's in his epistle," and I glanced up affectionately at the picture in the old carved frame, "'God is love.' Sid, if it is so, why should we be afraid to come to Him?"

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

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

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

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

And we had not lost an evening, even though for a time the train of thought was snapped asunder. It wanted but the prism of God's Word to divide that one little ray into colours of matchless beauty. At present it was but the little colourless ray, but we treasured it as such.
Jenny was all excitement and blushes, and Ernest's spirits were almost too much for me. They were not unkind, but I believe, seeing me sitting there, they almost forgot how much of an invalid I was still, and how little affected my nerves even then. Jenny had heard from mamma, and they were coming home in a fortnight. The house was to be thoroughly cleaned and purified, and then preparations made for the wedding; and as these, in fact, had been quietly going on for some time, there was not much to be done.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

LIGHT IN THE DWELLING.

“That they which enter in may see the light.”—Luke viii. 16.

A wee bit of a house—four small rooms and a lean-to—built up among the rocks, with broken pieces of the rocks themselves welded together by not un-
skilful hands, though with rough tools and rough cement. Two or three chimneys of the customary excrescent appearance, looking like huge after­growths without, but exceedingly comforting within, gave breadth to the house; tolerably-sized windows, prettily curtained; and a porch at the door, covered with Cape ivy, made up the sum total of Sidney’s little snuggery, to which he managed—not without a few difficulties to contend with—at last to spirit me away.

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

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

"We are just home now, Bessie!"

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

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

"How ever should we get up there with the buggy?"

"We are not going to try, little Sis," said Sidney cheerfully. "Our friends keep their stables below,
as you will see; and we shall find a path up to the house far less difficult than any you can see here."

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

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

I was very tired, and cold too, and I dare say I looked so, for in the large, clean kitchen—the largest room in the house, by-the-bye—they had brought an old, comfortable, rest-inspiring easy-chair into the coziest corner of the huge hearth; a great hassock placed for my feet; and as Sidney put me in it, smiling as he did so, I felt I could scarcely help being rested there. That kitchen was such a bright, clean place; there was never any dirty work done there. The furniture was of the simplest character—wooden
chairs and tables of plain deal, but white as snow, a
dresser of shelves full of glittering plates and dishes,
and bright covers, shining in the firelight, embellished the walls. Before the fire stretched a very
large and heavy rug, thick and warm to the feet, and
a strip of matting reached from that to my bedroom,
that my feet might not come in contact with the cold
stone floor. A little clock ticked cheerfully from the
chimney-piece; the window-ledge was full of books,
one great book in a well-used green baize cover con­spicuous among them. But the great charm to me
that night was the huge hearth and its burning
logs, diffusing such a genial glow through the room
that my face soon glowed in unison.

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

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

James Foster opened the great book before him,
slowly, reverently. He made no excuses, asked no
forbearance on our part. It was one of the customs
of the house—as much so as the breakfast on the
table in the morning, as the supper spread for our repast at night. He had not a suspicion that an excuse was needed, and I respected him for it.

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

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

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

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

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

And how we were blended into that petition now; the light that we were craving for was asked for us. It seemed as if those requests must be answered, and a great peace fell upon me.
I did not sleep directly; it was not my custom. I lay resting, half-buried in the soft, thick goose-down bed, pure and fragrant with lavender. The tiny little window, with its lifted curtains, showed me a bit of clear sky—and one fair star—between the rocky boulders that fell apart just before the casement, opening on to what I discovered in the morning to be a lovely reach of scenery. I thought, as I looked at that star, of the star in the East that had lighted the way to Jesus; and I went to sleep at last, dreaming that I had found Him—the "light"—the "life!"

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

We had many points in sympathy, Sid and I; but he was a man, and had stronger thoughts and stronger prejudices, and stronger doubts to contend with. So, while I slept, he sat at his little "lean-to" window, looking down—down into the valley and the foaming creek, flooded with moonlight—and pondered over all he had heard, till past midnight. "Wait on the Lord"—those words that seemed to give me rest, awoke all the impatience and restlessness of his
nature. He felt that he could not wait, that he could
grope no longer in the darkness; he wanted to know
then; with the unreasoning longing of an invalid for
morning, so he agonized for clearer light.

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

CHAPTER VII

LIGHT IN THE LIFE.

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

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

I had been a week in the "Nest" (for so the
Fosters had named their rocky home), and was gain-
ing health and strength daily, and yet it had been a
week of storm such as I had never before experienced.
It began the evening of the day after our arrival—
a sudden breaking up of clouds; a whispering and
moaning of the wind among the rocks, sweeping occasionally round the house with a wild, weird shriek, and shaking the windows as it passed; then across the range of hills in front of the house the lightning began its fitful play, followed by low mutterings of thunder, till at last down came the rain in such torrents that I had serious doubts whether our little "Nest" would not be carried bodily with it, and swept in triumph down the stream.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The rain passed away, and, as I before said, a splendid morning came at last, bright with sunshine.
It was the Sabbath, and everything seemed to me to wear a Sabbath sweetness about it. How I did enjoy standing out under the porch and looking round me, with that sunshine warming my very soul!

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

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

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

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

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

There was a little chapel some distance away, hidden somewhere among the hills; but there was the creek to cross, and it was very much swollen, and the ground was wet still, and of course they would not let me venture. By-and-by the faint tinkle of a little bell came up to us, mellowed by the distance, and Sidney went off with his host to the public service, leaving me in Mrs. Foster’s care, who had kindly arranged to stop with me and let the girl go.
Of course she had to do her work, and so I put on my hat and a warm wrap, and walked up and down before the house in the sunshine. It was so pleasant out there; the ground had dried up wonderfully, and the air was as sweet as could be. The great rocky boulders stood out so pure and clean after their washing in the rain, and the tufts of grass that grew between and around them were brilliantly green.

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

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

By-and-by she went into my room, tidying and putting away and making it comfortable for me. She was still singing low and to herself, but presently
she threw open the window, and stood a moment looking out, then, as she turned away to her dusting again, she sang out clearly and distinctly, so that I heard every word. The view from the window must have inspired her:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I rose up presently and walked to the bedroom door.

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

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

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

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

"Yes," I answered slowly; "some light, but a very little will do that."
“Do you know who has said, ‘I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness’?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIGHT FROM THE CROSS.

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

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

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

"The Templetons of Glen Linn?" I asked.

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

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

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

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

"Yes. I was introduced to the old gentleman—a fine, frank old fellow he is, too—and to Miss Templeton. She played the harmonium at the chapel. She is a very pretty girl, and so easy and graceful, I am sure you would like her."
"Umph!" It was a little note of distaste, fortunately uttered half under my breath—a little touch of jealous feeling made me think that I did not want to like her.

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

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

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

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

"What is he now?"

"He is a Christian, Bessie; and, as Mr. Foster tells me, he is serving his Master with all the talents
he has; imitating Him, he is going about doing good. It was a surprise to me, Bessie, you may think, when I recognized in the preacher of the morning my old harum-scarum schoolmate."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah! the material cross; but when we speak of the cross, we think of its results," said Mr. Foster firmly. "It is the Christ upon the cross, and why He was there, as I once heard a man say. That is the glory of the thing. 'He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and then follows the light of the whole, my dear young lady—'and with His stripes we are healed!'"
Yes, I seemed to stand in the light of the cross now as I had never stood before. The light and the glory of it all were revealing themselves even to me. How beautiful seemed those words, "with His stripes we are healed!" I could only think it, I could not answer; but sat with my back half-turned upon the others, my eyes full of glad tears, looking into the glowing cavernous depths of the fire.

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

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

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

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

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

“And yet this has to be done, Sid.”

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

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

“‘Simply to Thy cross I cling!’ Ah! it’s very beautiful—the very thing for you, little Sis, with your trusting nature. I haven’t got hold of it yet. I wish I had—I wish I could stand in the same light that I see you now stand in; but I can’t yet,” and he rose up to his full height, stretched out both arms
wearily, and then, saying he must have a cigar, went out into the open air.

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

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

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

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

I fell asleep, leaning forward on the great arm of the chair, and so Mrs. Foster found me when she came in. The cheerful rattling of the teacups and
spoons on the table roused me up at last, and I raised my head, to find tea nearly ready. From the little back kitchen I heard Mrs. Foster's cheerful voice; it had a new burden, and a very sweet one, chiming in delightfully with my thoughts:—

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

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORD.

"The entrance of Thy word gives light."—Psalm CXXX. 50.

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

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

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

Sidney went, of course, and I was left alone with my kind host and hostess, a prisoner to the house, for the roads were impassable, and the air was damp, and I had taken already a little cold, which wanted
careful nursing, or formed an excuse for it, which was perhaps the most likely, for Mrs. Foster lavished no end of attentions on me, and petted me up as no one but Sidney had ever petted me before in my life.

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

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

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

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

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

This week, wet as it was, Mr. Foster was absent from home. He had business connected with the sale of his dairy produce in Adelaide, and he had not returned when Sidney left for home. So we were a very small and quiet household indeed.
"We shall have fine weather again for a while," said Mrs. Foster, coming in after a final look round the premises before closing up for the night, about eight o'clock the evening before Jenny's wedding. "There's a bonny young moon showing itself over the edge of the hill, and the clouds are drifting away."

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah!" said Mrs. Foster, "it is a marvellous light; it breaks through the clouds often when we are least expecting, and then soon all our doubts and unbelief roll away under its influence, like those clouds are disappearing, and leaving the stars room to twinkle," she added, as she slowly drew down the blind, and with a kind kiss bade me good-night.
The sunshine streamed in at my window, and woke me early with its welcome light long before my usual hour of waking, and I lay thinking of Jenny and the new life into which she was going to enter that day; wistfully thinking what a glad thing it would be if she had the "light upon her path" which brings with it so much peace and gladness. At present everything was bright for her. She was going to a pleasant, happy home of her own with one she loved—one who thought no one was like her. Everything seemed just as it should be, yet one thing was wanting after all—the Light of life—the Light that shineth to eternal day.

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

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

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

"Sweet, arn't they?" she answered, smiling. "I thought they would please you. They are from the 'Glen.' Miss Templeton sent them with her love, and she will ride round to see you this afternoon."
The poor little violets! They had lost half their value already in my eyes—why I could scarcely tell I should not have liked to have defined a reason for not wishing to see their donor, and yet it was a fact.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LIGHT OBSCURED.

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

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

It was useless to rebel against it. It was ungracious to do so. Perhaps my long illness had made me nervous with strangers; perhaps my new feelings had rendered me sensitive. I was half ashamed that any indication of repulsion should be felt on my part in return for advances so evidently friendly, and I resolved that at least they should not become apparent to my visitor. I had been looking out all the afternoon along the rocky path, across the bridge of logs that was thrown over the creek, and up the winding road which I had been told led to Glen Linn, but no glimpse of a riding-skirt came through the sunshine or the shadow; and I turned at last from the window, where for a long time I had been idly sitting, to put the finishing stitches to a set of toilet mats I was making for Jenny's new home. This toilet set, a handsome embroidered sofa cushion and a floral bracket, being the sum total of my bridal offerings. They were to be in the new house before the return of the bridal pair from their tour.
I was rather low-spirited as I sat over my work. Possibly, as the afternoon grew on, I was tired. I was still weak and susceptible to outward influences. I was alone, too; no doubt more than was quite good for me, and possessed a rather morbid dread of strangers. What had become of the brightness that had won its way through all external darkness and gloom? Was all quite right that the light was so dim?

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

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

In the midst of it all the door was flung wide open, and there, framed by the lintels, stood a pretty, tall, slight figure, in a dark habit and jaunty little velvet cap, from which fell heavy braids of black hair, a fair, bright face, with the colour of a rose on cheeks and lips, and eyes that were beautiful in their brilliancy—just now softened, perhaps, by a gentler feeling for the little invalid in the large chair.
"There's not a creature about to introduce me, and I don't believe we need introducing, Miss Bruce," she exclaimed, with a dash of humour at the situation, as she came forward with extended hands, and, bending down, bestowed a warm kiss on my forehead.

"I am Nina Templeton and you are—?"

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

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

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

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

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

"A favour?"

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

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

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

"And now I must really go. Make my respects to Mrs. Foster, for I really do respect her; perhaps I
shall see her as I go to the stables. And to-morrow, by eleven, mind; I shall be very punctual," and with another embrace and kiss she was off.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I would rather wait for my brother, but I suppose if it is fine, and she comes for me, I ought to go."
"I think so; it will do you good to have the change, and the buggy she will bring for you is very easy. Do you not feel equal to the drive?"

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

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

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

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

But how had I got into the dark? How had this cloud come over me. Perhaps, like the disciples of old, who, when in the full glory of the transfiguration mount had thought to build them tabernacles, where they might abide in the glory, I too, in the joy and
the light of sins forgiven through the blood of the cross, had forgotten that here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come. I had yet to learn, like them, that from the mount I must descend into the valley, and that, whether in mountain or valley, Jesus was ever the same.

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

Ah! I yearned for the light; the darkness was painful to me. A cloud only had come over the brightness, perhaps to teach me to look up; and, suddenly, as I tossed about on my pillow, I remembered amid my tears a verse I had heard Mrs. Foster singing over and over again, perhaps because it was the only verse of the hymn that she remembered, and she liked it. It did me good; it cheered, it comforted me as I recalled it, and, after a little, soothed by its comfort, I fell asleep. How many times since have those words done me good—they are so true.
"What need of faith, if all were ever clear?
'Tis for the trial-time that this was given.
Though clouds be thick, its Sun is just as near,
And faith will find Him in the heart of heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT SHINING IN DARK PLACES.

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

The visit was inevitable; I saw I had better make up my mind to it; and perhaps after all it might do me good, and be very pleasant. So I ate my breakfast contentedly, and enjoyed the view from the porch afterwards, recalling the verse of the previous evening, as I watched the mist curl up and roll away, leaving the hills in the sunbeams. For days those hills had been shrouded by mist. Had I doubted their existence because they were concealed from my view? The sun itself had been hidden away, while the heavens were shrouded in black-
ness. Had I for a moment imagined it would never again appear? Why, then, had I permitted the thought that Jesus had left me, and that I should feel His loving presence no more?

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

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

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

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

"And it is lovely out of doors—so delightful," she continued gaily. "Are you quite ready? We won't lose a moment if you are. I do not want you to see Glen Linn under a cloud for the first time, and we must not depend too much on this lovely weather at this time of the year."
Yet Glen Linn was in reality under a cloud, though in those days I did not know it.

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

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

"She shall have 'all manner of care,' don't be afraid," replied Nina, with a wave of her hand, as we
turned the corner of a big rock and left the "Nest" behind in its shadow.

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

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

I lay back among the cushions, enjoying to the full the beauty of the drive, and the easy, luxurious moton of the carriage, Nina looking at me from time to time in great satisfaction, as she read my pleasure. She was very quiet—possibly purposely so—and I was glad to take in the loveliness of air and scene, without talking. I was not, therefore, fatigued in
the slightest when a turn in the road brought us under the shadow of a magnificent willow; and the next moment we were driving through large handsome gates, over a smooth carriage-drive, bounded on each side with lovely flowering shrubs, and blossoms of every kind that could venture out in the wintry sun. We had entered fairyland, so it seemed to me, for I had never before visited such a lovely place. Beauty everywhere—green lawns, graceful trees, and murmuring fountains; and in the background the white portico and walls of a large house, with green Venetian shutters, and heavy jalousies to screen from the summer sun when it came too hotly. An aviary of canaries stood on the lawn in front of the house. A peacock spread its exquisite tail as we approached, and a noble greyhound came bounding to meet us, followed by a little silky lap-dog barking its glad welcome.

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

"She is as tired as possible, mamma; or, if she is not she ought to be," said Nina, cutting short her mother's kind words of welcome; and, drawing me into the room, she took me to the fire. Placing me in a large easy chair, all springs and silken cushions, she took off my wraps, putting my feet upon an ottoman,
and gave me the most delicate little luncheon that ever a convalescent enjoyed.

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

They were so kind—mother and daughter—each in a different way; for they were very dissimilar. Nina—so graceful, so refined, amidst all her buoyant spirits—seemed scarcely to be the daughter of such a mother, for Mrs. Templeton was little and stout, and decidedly unpretentious and plain, with not too much education. And yet her face was a very lovable one, her manner caressing and gentle, and something still higher had expression in her loving eyes, and rested on her brow. When I looked at her, involuntarily the words came into my remembrance “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee,” and I learnt afterwards that I had rightly interpreted the expression. The mother and one son were united in this, each quietly working for the kingdom, each striving to diffuse a light in the dark places around them; for the rest, while Mr. Templeton freely gave of his substance for the “good of the cause,” and
was never asked for a subscription in vain, while Nina
busied herself in all active works connected with the
church her father patronized, working with a will and
a zest well worthy of imitation and esteem,—it was
not for the love of Christ or His cause, not for the
furtherance of His kingdom, or for the diffusion of
His light through a world all dark and drear with­
out it. Generous, kindly motives no doubt influenced
them in much they did, but that was all.

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

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

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

CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

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

1 Thess. v. 5.

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

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

"This will never do," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Foster will say I am not fulfilling my promise to take all manner of 'care of you,' if I let you take cold," and she laughingly hurried me in-doors again. "I did so want you to see my violets," she added, as we once more went up the steps to the hall. "And now I shall just take you up to my room, and you shall lie down and sleep till dinner."
I did not sleep, however, for a long time, but lay looking at the bijou of a room into which I had been transported, sinking in the soft couch, with its dainty lace draperies upheld by a golden arrow, and looking from the lace that edged my fine lawn pillow to the silken couch, the draped Psyches, the handsome inlaid wardrobe, and the moss and rosebuds of the carpeted floor.

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

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

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

"Fortunate, is it not, that I told Mrs. Foster I should not bring you home to-night?—for you could not go now, however much you wished," said Nina
exultingly. "You will just have to make yourself contented, Miss Bruce, with poor Glen Linn and its inmates; we will try to make you as comfortable as we can."

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

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

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

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under
a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yes, He would—He would; and through all the mists and clouds and darkness which would hang
heavily round this mundane state, I would trust for the time being, and look blissfully forward for the rest—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XIII.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT.

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

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

Jenny was married, and had gone off, bright and
happy, with her husband into her new life, leaving
all manner of kind messages for me behind her.
Everything had passed off well, so said Sidney. The
day had been charming, the assembly gay; my little
sisters, Maude, Lilly, and Ally, had made very pretty
bridesmaids, and had been delighted with the honour;
and mamma was so much better for her seaside
residence that her terrible headaches were quite gone, and she was only anxious about me. As to Gussy, he wanted me home again badly; and father sent word that he should come and fetch me himself if I did not soon return, for he could not do without his little daughter. These were some of the tidings Sidney brought from home; and I began to think that my "Nest" was already showing signs of being broken up—that I could not much longer keep away from the home in which I was so much needed.

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

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

I sat quietly in the firelight, thinking my own thoughts, and they were not all bright or happy ones. Sidney was very dear to me. We had been so much together, and, notwithstanding the difference in our ages, we were so alike in many of our thoughts and feelings; so unlike, in fact, to the rest of the family, that I naturally shrank from everything that would take him from me. Nina, I saw, was quite capable of
doing that, for not merely was her prettiness an attraction—and she really was a handsome girl—but she was graceful and fascinating even in her brusqueness; and I could not wonder that Sidney should think so. But I was sorry, for we had commenced our search after the light together, and Nina would not help in the search. She would rather retard it, and that I knew by her own words.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Light is such a beautiful, and yet so simple a simile, a little child may understand it. Light!
penetrating through all our darkness, our sin, our unbelief. Light! the perfection of all that is fair and clear and open. ‘In Thy light shall we see light.’ Christ the light, and all revealed in Him. Do not you see, Miss Bruce?”

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

“It is something to be able to say you have found it out. To have found Christ is to have found light. Away from Christ all is darkness; and the nearer we keep to Christ, the brighter the light on our way. I, too, have not long made this discovery, Miss Bruce,” he presently added, taking his mother’s seat at my side, for she had been called out of the room.

“I had a long search after the light, and at one time nearly despaired of finding it. After your brother left college, I fell in with a lot of young fellows, who thought it clever to be sceptical on all matters of religion, who poured contempt on the cross and the Christ, deifying the goddess Reason. But even then I could not see any good in the false light she hung out; her theories were dark and unsatisfactory, and tended only to darkness. But I was able at last, by God’s infinite mercy, to break the snare and escape. ‘The entrance of His Word brought light,’ and I find now that nothing clears away the clouds like that Word. You have found that, too, I think?”

“Yes, something fresh every day,” I answered, looking up with eyes filled with tears. “Mr. Templeton, I want this for my brother, as well as for myself,” I added desperately, as I looked towards
the piano, where Sidney was standing, turning over the pages of music for Nina.

"And I for my sister," he replied, looking grave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes; in the morning.”

“If the weather is fine, we shall see you then,” said Sidney, as Kent drove off.
CHAPTER XIV.

THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE.

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

Psalm iv. 6.

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

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

The weather for many days was lovely, and my rocky lair put forth all its beauties. The days were all pleasant, joyous sunshine; the nights bright with a glorious moon. I wandered at will, wrapped in a plaid, in and out of the house, and among the rocks, singing to myself as I went, "God is good, God is
good!'' for how visibly did His goodness appear in everything around me in all I saw; and how feelingly could I exclaim in a view of what He had done for me, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I think it was harder for Sidney to leave the "Nest" than for me. Since we had become acquainted with the Templetons he had become more than ever attached to it. I went there once or twice with him, for the fine weather continued, and we all had many rides together, as they said that I might see some of the country round about before I left it. But Sidney managed, by some pretext or other, to visit Glen Linn every day; and it required no prophet to interpret the attractive power. Once a roll of music came through the post to him from
Adelaide. I had no occasion to inquire its destination; I knew it was not for me. I was, however, losing my first feelings of jealousy, and I believe I could have been glad if it had been any one else but Nina Templeton who had attracted him. But I knew that her influence over him was not a good one. She had a way of sneering with those red lips of hers, and her low, bantering laugh at anything sacred, like a cold, sharp wind, was enough to cut the delicate blossoms of faith, and nip the tender plant of conviction in the bud.

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

He was a kind, good brother to me, was Sid. Not for a moment would I have it suspected that he neglected me. He never did that. I was still his
darling sister, whom he was anxious, lovingly anxious, to bring back to health and strength. And so he took me daily long, pleasant rides or drives, during the few remaining days of our stay. And it was not always premeditated that the Templetons, brother and sister, often joined us. I certainly could not help seeing that when Nina was by, Sid had eyes and ears for no one else; and I did feel lonely sometimes, in the evening, when, after sitting awhile with me, he would put on his great coat and hat, and saunter out for a stroll or a ride. I knew well where his horse would take him; but I must have been exacting indeed to have expected him always to be at my side.

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

Mr. Foster’s honest, outspoken words of wisdom—*heavenly* wisdom, and not the learning of the schools—was just the kind of teaching I needed in those days. His strong faith was so good to see—his trust
so infectious. The lessons I learned in that lovely nook were worth remembering, and many a time since has the recollection done me good.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Has he? Then I expect he will," she answered, with a degree of indifference which brought the
colour to Sid's cheek, and made him bite his lips. I saw Kent turn and look at her; but he said nothing.

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

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

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

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

Such a prayer, too, followed—for Sid, for me, individually. Oh, how could Sid resist its persuasive eloquence? It seemed to embody everything we needed for this life and the next. I clasped the hand
of this strong, earnest Christian almost reverently when it was over. I had no voice to bid him good-night; but his "God bless you" came from his very heart. I was sure of that.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LIGHT OF HIS CLOUD.

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

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

I had thought of this many a time as I looked up at some fleecy cloud touched with the glory of the setting sun, or at night turned into silvery liquid flame by the moon, over which it slowly floated, wondering in my heart whether the pillars of cloud and of flame that led those murmuring people were indeed such as these. I had never spoken to any one on the subject, only since my illness I had often thought how good it would be to have such visible guidance—guidance at least as palpable—to feel just so sure of the way in which to go.
Having thought out all this to myself, I was rather surprised, though greatly pleased, when Mr. Foster took out his big Bible directly after breakfast, saying that we must have one more reading together, and opened on the very subject of my thoughts.

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

“Nor knows the shadow of a turn.”

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

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

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

Sidney shook his head. “There must be a light
before it can shine, friend," he gloomily answered, as, with a slight lifting of the reins, he gave the signal to old Nero, and cantered off.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We cannot afford to have you take cold now you are so much better." Then, with a playful touch of my cheek, he added,—
“Don’t be gloomy on my account, little Sis; it will all come right some day, I hope. I don’t see my way out of the darkness yet; but I may, you know, I may.”

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

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

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

“It’s just about time you came home,” said Gussy,
with a boyish hug, as he passed me to help Sid with the trap; and I began to think it was.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.

"Let us put on the armour of light."—Rom. xiii. 12.

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

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

With the exception of those rides, Sid and I were not much together after our first coming home. He had of course many duties to attend to, and a good deal of riding about the country, but I knew that more than once his horse's head was turned in the direction of Glen Linn, by the tokens that he brought
back with him—some choice flower, or mineral specimen from the rocks near the "Nest," or a message from Nina. He always gave these rather awkwardly, and as if he would gladly have avoided the necessity; and I shared a little in the awkwardness, for I was sorry that he still continued to be fascinated by what I feared would prove false fire. I wished with all my heart that he would forget Nina. He was always gloomy and reserved after one of these visits—less inclined for my company, and with the look of unrest more than ever on his brow and eyes.

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

I could seldom be spared away from home now, but I certainly had more time to myself, for I had nothing to do with the children. Miss Upton was a perfect disciplinarian, and kept them in excellent order, and naturally they were better under her surveillance than under mine. Sometimes, indeed, I
took them with me for a walk, or a run, or a drive in the pony carriage—two or three at a time, or all together—giving them pleasure and their governess a rest. Now and then on Sunday evenings I sat under the old willow and read and talked with them, and we sang together some of the few sweet children's hymns that we then knew; and those were peaceful, happy times; Maude especially seemed to love them.

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

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

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

"You are quite a little sunbeam of late, Bessie," he
exclaimed fondly, one day; "that illness was good for you."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I sat still a long time after that, my cheeks still hot with the effort I had made to let a little of the light shine. I did so want papa to know something of my
new hopes and aspirations—something of the brightness that had entered my life—and yet I had been so uncertain of how he would take it. I did not think he would have received it so quietly, yet I was half frightened at his last words, "I must keep bright for him to believe that I had learned well." That was what my tiny light was to do—to shine for Jesus. Oh that it might!

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

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

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

But the clouds might come, as they had come before! Ah! they might; but only for a while. The sun was always there to dissipate those clouds, and the cry,
"Lighten my darkness, O Lord," would not be overlooked by Him who "out of darkness bringeth forth light."

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

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

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

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

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

THE SWEETNESS OF LIGHT.

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

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

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

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

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

I looked above me as my fingers went mechanically forward with their work, watching the soft light as it filtered through the leaves, and my heart gave
a little, answering throb as I remembered words of that morning’s reading, “Truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.” It was another aspect of this glorious light in which I had so long been basking. What a number of aspects it had, and how it seemed that the more I gazed into its depths, fresh views of loveliness arose, like the colours of a kaleidoscope—ever changing, but ever beautiful.

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

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

He started when he saw me, but came up to my side, flinging himself down upon one of the low garden-chairs that stood in the verandah, in that listless
manner so indicative of the state of his mind, that I looked anxiously up at him.

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

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

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

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

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

"And why not?" I gently asked. "Is it not the pride of intellect which men so much esteem that keeps them back from the simple truths of the Gospel? Just because they are so simple—so easy—they will not receive them. It seems to me it is another rendering of the question, 'Are not the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?' How well that servant seemed to understand his master's mind when he answered, 'My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?""
“Yes, but I suppose it is natural to like to do great things. No doubt pride has much to do with it.

“And this is why these things are ‘hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes,’” I sadly answered.

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

“Yes,” I sighed sadly, “the works of darkness.”

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

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

“Beautiful and poetic enough in theory, Sis; but it’s the practice, the hard practice, that fails too often; and you see, after all, we are practical beings.”
"Oh, but it is not mere poetry. Darkness and light are every-day, familiar terms; we can perfectly understand them as they succeed to each other; they form a part of our life. And surely it is easy also to understand the darkness of the mind!—and to me it seems quite as easy to believe that Christ's love can bring light."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I stood a long time at the open window of my bedroom that night, looking out upon the moon-lit paths, and the shadows that came between. The shadow had fallen across my light. In the morning I had basked in its effulgence; in the evening it was obscured by a mist. My heart was heavy with foreboding—too heavy to go to sleep.
After all, I thought, at last, gently closing my window, "Our darkness cannot do away with the sweetness of God's light. The light is constant; and it can penetrate all dark corners. Poor Sidney may be led away for a time, but God has promised to hear prayer for light. He has promised—He has promised. He will not—He cannot!—break His word."

CHAPTER XVIII.

REBELLING AGAINST THE LIGHT.

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

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

Still remembered! But thrust on one side, just as we close our eyes to that which we have no desire to see. So was he shutting his eyes to the light, because it was making revelation hard for his manly pride to endure—revelation that little accorded with present actions, and against which he therefore rebelled. And
all this I could associate with his visits to the Glen; it was easy to me to tell when he had been there, either by the recklessness of his manner, by his excessive spirits, or by his gloomy reserve. And that Miss Templeton had much to do with his turning his back to the light would have been patent to everyone, had they known what I did.

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

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

One of the loveliest of the last spring days was that appointed for our visit. Our horses were brought round to the front of the house about noon, just when the sun was highest in the heavens, but a pleasant little breeze was playing with the jessamine leaves, shaking the perfume from their yellow petals, and delightfully tempering the heat. Had our ride to terminate anywhere else, I should have enjoyed the anticipation, for horse exercise was always exhilarating to me, but I did not want to go to the Glen. I had no pleasure in Nina's society, and I dreaded it heartily for my brother. I had a horror, too, of
"parties," and shrank into myself at the bare idea of the coming evening. Sidney, I knew, had no greater love for them than I had; but then Nina could reconcile him to any disagreeables, and he uttered no word of dissent—on the contrary, he seemed full of life and spirits; and we rode gaily along, chatting about everything and everybody, only ignoring any approach to the one subject that was uppermost in my heart, but of which I dared not speak.

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

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

I remembered well having passed that same way, weak and despairing, and yet not without some little hope amidst the despondency. I remembered also the gladness of those days among the rocks, when
the light dispelled my mental darkness, and the warm rays of the Sun of Righteousness came in upon my soul.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I was thinking of that time we first came here, Sid, and of the dear little 'Nest.' We are getting quite near it, are we not?"
"No! that would be out of our way. We have no time to spare, and shall see nothing of it. You see that road to the right? We turn off there. It leads directly to the Glen. If we were on the top of those rocks, Bessie, we should see Glen Linn stretching itself beneath us."

"Have you ever seen it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We did not make our entrance there, however. Sidney, who appeared perfectly "free" of the Glen, skirted the huge hedge of hawthorn that led towards
the back of the house, to a side gate in view of the stables. We dismounted under the shade of an immense acacia, beautiful now with its snowy blossoms; and Sidney, taking possession of my parcel, gave the horse into the care of a boy who came forward to take them, and slowly led the way, through another gate, back to the house.

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

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

I cannot tell how it was that at that moment I was sure of my brother's fate; and that, though I felt for his disappointment, I could not help also being rather glad. Nina, I was positive, could never make him happy; she was not worthy of him; but how could she stoop to entangle him, and draw him away, when she had nothing to give him in return.
I was just feeling anxious about Sidney's white face—for the colour had left it very pale, as it receded—when she caught sight of, and came eagerly forward to meet us, just as impulsive, just as flattering in her welcome as ever; and then in the coolest, most natural manner possible she made us known to Mr. Murray, committing Sidney to his charge, while she hurried off with me to the house, with just the old warm, yet imperious ways, doing and saying all sorts of kind things, and yet with that certain degree of patronage, from which I instinctively shrank. There was something so unreal about it all.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XIX.

A RIFT IN THE DARKNESS.

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

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

Nina was in extravagant spirits, and inclined to be coquettish with Mr. Murray, who was rather demonstrative in his attentions. I could not blame him for
that, as he certainly had a right to show that the diamonds he had placed on her finger were no idle form, but a veritable avant-courier of the coming event. More than once I saw a decided look of displeasure contract his brow as she talked or danced with Sidney, as though he had heard of her flirtations with him, and resolved to put a stop to them by decidedly proclaiming his position.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Well, this was the cloud; but there was a little rift in it, revealing the light beyond. The snare was broken; and my brother, though sorely wounded, was free. Could I not safely leave the result with my
heavenly Father? Would He not out of this darkness bring forth light? Then suddenly the recollection of some of Mr. Foster's words came to me as I lay,—"Your Father has promised—He would have you remind Him of His promises. Remember the 'Thou hast said.' Plead that, and all will come right."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You are thinking all sorts of evil of me, I know, Bessie Bruce," she exclaimed, seizing my hands in her old impetuous, imperious manner; "and no doubt," she added half defiantly, "a great deal of it is just; but don’t forget that you have the best of it. Yours is the belief, mine the doubts: yours is the light, mine the darkness. I suppose I am to be pitied; well, maybe I am. At any rate people in the dark do many reckless things—many which they would
gladly undo, if they could. My deeds, I know, have
many of them to be repented of at leisure. Good­
bye, dear; think as well of me as you can;” and
before I could answer her, or recover from my sur­
prise, she had disappeared among the trees of the
shrubbery. At the same moment a groom appeared
leading my horse from the stable, and assisting me
to mount, he led it by the bridle through the gate.
There I found Sidney, impatiently pacing up and
down, as though he had waited some time, and was
in haste to be gone.

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

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

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