CHAPTER XX.

THE CLOUD THAT COMETH BETWIXT.

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

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

It was the day of our melancholy return from Glen Linn—the more melancholy to me by the very evident effort my brother made to shake off his despondency and talk on indifferent subjects—I had seen but little of him. My father had business in Adelaide, and not feeling inclined for the journey, or having other occupation at home, Sidney was despatched in his place. I was glad of it at the time, hoping that it would draw his mind from Glen Linn and Nina. But one sight of his worn face on his
return was enough to convince me how utterly useless the bustle of the city and the hurry of business had proved to allay the fever of the mind. He was absent nearly three weeks—I had counted the days of his absence; and yet I was glad to have him away from any danger of encounter with Nina Templeton. Not till long afterwards did I know that in the very streets of Adelaide he had met her with Mr. Murray—gay, bright as ever, altogether ignoring any right he had for offence or grievance. No wonder, poor fellow, he returned home even worse than he went—Nina's influence and Nina's witcheries still dominant—and heart and mind sick.

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

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

I felt, then, that I was helping him; that there was a soothing, if not a healing power in words and melody.
It was an intensely hot summer that year, I remember. The roses were burnt up on their stems at the window; and the pathways in the garden carpeted by crisp, prematurely falling leaves. Everything around was brown and sere, excepting the vines and the trees; and it was refreshing to turn to them in the midst of the heat to have something green for the eye to rest on when the flowers had almost forsaken us.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For a time only; then came a little uplifting of the cloud. "What had God promised?" I lay there, with my head upon the cushions, thinking it all over. Why, He had promised help in the time of trouble, and I was forgetting to call upon Him. He had bid me cast my burden upon Him, and had promised to sustain; and here was I bearing my own burden. Bearing it? No, but crushed down—prostrated beneath it. Was this as it should be?
Was this honouring God? Was this taking my Father at His word? I rose and went to the window, and kneeling down upon the broad seat, with my elbows on the sill, looked down upon the broad expanse of vines stretching before me, fresh and beautiful, with abundant promise of fruit—at the spreading peach-trees, with their rosy, downy burden; and, as I looked, the memory of God's goodness came over me like an overwhelming flood.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should I play? For a time my fingers ran aimlessly about the keys, mingling soft melodies, improvising harmonies; but at length, my whole
mind full of the morning prayer and praise, I played a little running symphony of my own. I improvised both tune and words—singing what, most strangely, I have never since forgotten:

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

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

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

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

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

"I know but little of Him, Bessie."

"Yes, dear Sid, or you would trust Him more. When we know more of Him, the doubt and the darkness goes."
"My doubts and darkness only thicken, it seems to me."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He took the book from my hand in surprise, to see if indeed the words were there; then, rising, he went slowly off.
That evening, in turning over the newspapers before putting them away, I came upon this announcement:

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXI.

LIGHT WITH BELIEF.

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

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

Looking back on those past years I can realize
that now—can understand that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

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

Following the summer's heat, the autumn days were delicious, pleasant days of coolness and brightness too, for the garden was gay with late roses and chrysanthemums, and the violets distilled double sweetness under the dewy influences that fell from them after summer's hot winds had done its worst with their spreading leaves. But, alas! those bright days were not bright to me, for the darkness and the cloud still rested on our dwelling, and Sidney, my beloved Sidney, seemed fading away like the leaves.
He did not yield willingly to the weakness; perhaps it would have been better if he had. He had been accustomed to consider himself so strong, it was hard to relinquish old customs, old habits; it was hard to allow others to see his weakness. We little knew how long he had concealed the critical symptoms now developing, or how much suffering he had kept to himself. He tried to do so still, but his sister’s anxious eyes were not here readily deceived.

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

"You think there is real disease?"

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

"Not that I’m aware of. He is particularly reticent respecting his affairs and doings, and always has been, from a boy. However, I have every confidence in you, doctor, and shall leave it in your hands to discover what is really the matter with him. Cure him, if you can; we can’t spare him." And my father turned away with tears in his eyes, which only I could see.
Heart disease! And so this was the end of all my happy hopes for my brother! I shut myself in my room again, and lay prostrate on the floor a long time, unable to yield him up. "Was heart disease ever cured? I thought not, but I had heard that people suffering from this disease sometimes lived for years; and why not dear Sid?" This thought revived me again. Oh! if God would only spare him; that together we might walk in the light, and rejoice.

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

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

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

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

It was all out now. We all knew what there was to dread, and the only good of the knowledge was that the doctor might administer relief, and teach us what to do on the recurrence of any attack. But, oh, how my heart yearned over my brother; how I longed to know whether he was trying the light of God’s Word to disperse his doubts; whether, indeed, his very trouble was drawing him into the light, after which he was so blindly searching.
It was some days after this that one evening, just as the shadows were deepening over the garden, and the faint light of the rising moon threw its illumination among the leaves above us, that Sidney lay on his cane lounge in the verandah, and I sat beside him, with my work idly in my lap, and my hands folded above it, for it was too dark to see the stitches.

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

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

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

"It came with the belief, dear Sid," I replied, my heart giving a sudden leap, for I knew he was referring to our last conversation on the subject, and the words in Lamentations—"It is good for a man that he should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "Yes," I continued, "I remember
it very well. The light was from the cross. Oh, how the darkness fell away, and I seemed to see on that cross Jesus, dying for my sins, life everlasting purchased by His death for me. Ah, Sid, and for you, too!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I told you, too, that I made no headway, and for a time I gave it all up, put the thought from me, resolved to let things go." He paused for a moment,
for the memory of that time was still very bitter to him, and my own eyes were wet with tears as I quietly pressed his hand in sympathy.

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

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

"That was only for a time, Sid?"

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

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

"After two or three of these attacks, which I so carefully concealed from you all, though I could not the effects that followed, and which you know all about now, the thirst for the light returned—for it was a thirst—more like that than anything I know of. I could no longer remain satisfied to let things go on as they were. Life might end at any moment; the uncertainty was something terrible. Bessie, the struggle after light was almost more than I could bear, yet I could not talk of it even to you."
"And then?" I asked, sick at heart with the consciousness of what all this must have been to him, and yet trembling with a hope of what was yet to come. "And then, dear Sid?"

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

"And oh, Sidney, how beautiful! 'In the hands of a Mediator.' And what a Mediator!" I exclaimed with trembling joy, for he indeed—my brother, my beloved brother—had come into the light at last, and what revelations it was making to him of Christ and His love and power.

"I see it all now," he continued; "how works can never justify a man, for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law of Moses.' This curse Christ bore for us when He died on the cross. 'He was made a curse for us.' He mediates the cause of all who believe in Him. In the hands of this Mediator, Bessie, it is all right for time and for eternity."

His voice was growing weak from the very inten-
sity of his emotion, and presently, kissing me, he rose, and said he thought he would go to bed. "You may bring me my potion presently, dear—if you will—and see that I am all right; but, darling, don't be afraid, I am happier to-night than I have ever been in my life; it seems as if the light was just shining down into my soul."

I could not sleep that night; I lay awake, my heart divided between joy and sorrow: joy because my prayers were answered, the light had come—had burst aside the clouds, scattering them right and left, and my brother was basking in the full light of the cross. The sorrow, and the fear, and the trembling was for myself, lest but for a little while this dear, this precious brother was to be left with me. And this, how hard it seemed to me!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PERFECTION OF LIGHT.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—Rev. xxii. 22.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."—Rev. xxii. 5.

I think it is Peter, in his first epistle, who, warm, enthusiastic, burning with holy fire, as he considered the greatness of the position to which the people of God were called—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"—tells
them that they are thus chosen that they may
"show forth the praises of Him who had called
them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Days passed after that happy evening, signalized
by my brother's entrance into this light. It seemed
as if the darkness had indeed passed, and the beau-
tiful, clear, beaming light illumined all things within
and without. Not that my brother's physical con-
dition was better; alas! too certainly it was not so.
Whether it was the effects of growing weakness, or
the natural consequence of the rapid progress of the
peculiar form of his disease, I do not know; but he no
longer made any effort to resume his usual occupation.
Evidently with the absence of the necessity for con-
cealment had ceased the power to do so. There
were days in which he suffered little but weakness;
but there were others marked by alternate attacks
of agonizing pain—a sudden fainting, alarming in
the last degree, and all the doctor could do was
to soothe or mitigate the suffering. We knew
that the end must come, how soon we could not
tell.

But the light shone through all the suffering and
the pain, and in those days I had my beloved brother
much to myself. He liked to have me near him; we
understood a language with which, at that time, no
one else in our household was familiar. My father
came in and out with his sorrowful eyes, feeling, I
knew, to the full the bitterness of losing his first-born,
and his helplessness to relieve; wondering, too, at the
light that shone upon his countenance, even after a
paroxysm of pain, and at the words that fell from his
lips of that Mediator of whose marvellous love his whole heart was full.

And now I was the learner, the recipient; for Sidney's faith rose higher and shone brighter than mine, as though some of the golden light from the celestial city had already touched him with its beams. The cross for him was glory-crowned. He had discovered the key to its mysteries, and he basked in the light with the holy joy of one who had found a treasure.

Where were the doubts and the darkness gone? Gone before the light of that cross. He had come to Christ. The light, and believing in Him, could no longer abide in darkness. A marvellous light was it? Ah me, the change was as great as from night to morning.

Autumn days were waning to a close; the mornings and the evenings were growing chilly and damp. There were already intervals of rainy days, and the garden paths were heavy and dank with fallen leaves. We could seldom sit out of doors now—only indeed in the middle of the day, when the sun came out warmly for a time, and rendered it safe or pleasant. Over-ripe grapes still hung their desolate clusters here and there among the discoloured leaves of the vines, but even these were passing, leaving bare stems behind them. The flower garden had still its bright spots—a few monthly roses, scarlet geranium, and flaunting chrysanthemum reigned dominant. But the rain was putting fresh life into the herbage, and the evergreen shrubs were wonderfully flourishing beneath its influence. The lawn was becoming velvety in its softness.
We chiefly occupied the same dear little sitting-room that had been assigned to me in my former illness, looking full upon the loveliest part of the garden—the flower-bordered lawn. We saw nothing of bare vines, or discoloured leaves, or wet leaf-strewn paths, for the gardener’s hand was visible—clearing, and tying up, and clipping; so that even amidst the falling rain there was something pleasant to look upon,—and the range of hills beyond was glorious always.

Sidney loved that room. It was a little sanctuary to us both. But it was strange to see him where I had been, seated in the large easy-chair, wrapped in a loose coat, which day by day hung more loosely on him; or lying on the deep, old, spring-cushioned couch while I read to him, or talked, just as he was inclined; or sat and worked by his side while he slept.

I remember one afternoon he had been lying listening to me as I read from a volume of Bonar’s poems. It was raining without, but the fire shone brightly upon the hearth, with its cheery little jets of flame; and the couch had been wheeled round so that he could watch the blaze, while I read. I had opened last upon some verses I had never seen before. We both felt as though it was expressly for us:—

“Light has arisen—we walk in its brightness;
Joy has descended—its fulness has come;
Peace has been spoken—we hear it, we take it;
Angels are singing, and shall we be dumb?

“Happy in Him who has loved us and bought us,
Rich in the life which He gives to His own;
Fill’d with the peace passing all understanding,
Never less lonely than just when alone.
"Safe in His strength—in His love ever happy—
What are the tremblings and tossings of time?
Firm in His grace, to His arm ever clinging,
Upwards, still upwards, we buoyantly climb."

We sat silent a few moments after I had ceased reading, full of the beauty of the words; and each of us taking in their meaning for ourselves. The afternoon was waning and was unusually dark—so dark that I could with difficulty see to read the last words. The logs on the fire had softly fallen together, sending forth a flood of ruddy flame; the rich, warm light danced on the walls, and lighted up the letters on the backs of the books, throwing a soft radiance over my favourite, "John the beloved." It fell also on my brother's couch, but his face was left in shadow—I could not see whether he was asleep or awake, till he softly said,—

"Bessie, it must be very pleasant to be permitted to work for such a Master."

"Oh, Sidney! Yes," I answered, with bated breath, "a pleasure and an honour."

"Having come 'into the light' one's self, you know, to be permitted to lead others into it," he continued sadly. "Little Sis, I fear this service is denied me; I have entered upon it so late."

"They also serve who only stand and wait, dear Sid," I tearfully replied. "God accepteth according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not; and, Sid dear, you cannot tell what work our dear Lord may give you to do yet, and at any rate it must be as He wills it."

"Yes, I know that, Bessie; I am content to rest
in His hands, and to do all according to His will. Content? eh, more than content—it is happiness to resign one's self into His hands, and feel that all He does is well."

I was crying quietly now, but he caught sight of my bowed head, and called me to him.

"Tears, Bessie!" he exclaimed, drawing down my head to his shoulder, and fondly stroking my hair. "I want you to feel how well it is with me whatever happens, dear. I wish I could prove to you what it is to me to have come into the light, and how clear that light is. I think you would not be afraid for your brother then."

"Oh, Sid, I am not afraid—it is not that."

"I know, I know," he answered gently; "but, Bessie, at worst it will be but for a little time; we shall have an eternity to spend together. If rest is given to me and work for you, dear, there will be light for the work. You have not to bear your own burden, remember that."

I vainly tried to speak, so he presently went on,—

"You must take Gussy under your loving care; he need's a sister's help—he is so impulsive, so easily led away. He is a rough diamond needing a little polish, but I have strong hope for him. We have had several talks together lately. He is thinking. You must try to help him to work the thoughts out."

"Sidney dear, you will help me?" I faltered, with that indefinite feeling of coming sorrow for which I could scarcely account.

"Yes, dear, when I can; but the time may be
short, Bessie, and I like to speak while I have the opportunity. I want you to know, too, that while I have left the greatest portion of my land to Gussy, I have settled all dear mother’s money upon you. Do you understand me, dear?"

“Oh, Sidney, don’t!”

He was silent for a little. We were almost in darkness, for the flame had died out, and only the red glow of the ashes remained. The bitter tears would come, though I tried to keep them back, for I was afraid they would trouble him; but though trembling with fear, of what I scarcely knew, I managed presently to say,—

“Do you feel worse to-night, dear Sidney?”

“Worse? No, dear; only realizing a little more of the bright shining which makes earth look dim by the contrast,” he replied cheerfully. “You do not grudge me a near approach to the ‘perfection of light,’ dear Bessie, do you?”

“No, dear Sid. Only I wish to go with you.”

“Ah, Bessie, I think you are wanted here yet. Your light has some dark places to shine in; let it burn brightly for Jesus. There is dear father and Gussy, and the rest. We don’t want to leave them in the darkness. Maybe, when I am gone, they will think more of the few words I have been able to utter. For me it has been written: ‘At evening time it shall be light’—not the evening time of years, but of life. Bless God for the light whenever He sends it!”

We sat silently together in the darkness for some minutes longer; then, startled by the increasing quiet
I rose to put the fire together, and light the lamp. I came back then again to his side, to look at my brother. He was lying very quietly with his eyes closed, but there was a deep pallor on his brow and dark shadows round his eyes, that betrayed exhaustion. With no other fear than this I exclaimed,—

"I must give you your medicine, dear Sid," and bending down to kiss him, turned away to get his draught. As I did so my father entered the room.

"I have been walking up and down the verandah, and wondered when you were going to light the lamp," he said. "Sid, my boy," he continued, turning towards the couch, "I wanted to consult you—" He stopped suddenly, and went nearer. "Why Bessie, child, your brother has fainted!" and he seized the medicine from my hands.

Fainted! ah, no. This time it was no faint. I might have known that earth was indeed growing dim to him, because of the exceeding brightness of the light from the celestial city—the city that "needeth no candle, nor the light of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof." My brother! oh, my brother! he had left us without a sign, without a sigh. The perfection of light was his for ever!

I do not know how I lived through that night. I could not realize that the end had indeed come. I could not realize that no longer I should have my beloved one to share my sorrows and my joys; and I could not at once discern the loving hand that had so gently taken him to Himself, away from all the darkness and gloom, and mists of this earth—through which, sometimes, the light even of that
glorious city breaks so dimly. I was left behind; that was all I could, for a time, comprehend. And my head and heart were bowed down together.

They took me away from home; my dear father was all goodness and kindness to me. He sought, by change of scene and sea voyages, to restore my sinking energies. For a time the clouds came very thickly over the sky. I refused to be comforted.

It was my father's words at last brought me to see that I was rebelling against my best Friend. "Bessie," he said, quietly and sadly, as he sat in the window of a hotel at St. Kilda one evening, looking out upon the sea, "Was all that once made you so happy mere sentiment? Has the light gone?—is nothing left?"

"Oh, father—No! I am weak and sinful. Jesus still lives; He is the light! Somehow I have forgotten. I will forget no more."

And the next day we went quietly on board the steamer, and back to our home; I, to take up my mission, to shine for Jesus—to show that the light was unchanged, eternal!
PART II.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT.

"Having received Christ, so walk ye in Him."

CHAPTER I.

TAKING UP THE THREAD.

"Walk in the light . . . have fellowship one with another."
1 John i. 7.

SIDNEY, my beloved brother, was slumbering in the little graveyard. One would think, indeed, that I only thought of him as there, and not that he had entered into the joy of his Lord, and was dwelling in the city of light that "needeth no candle—neither the light of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof." I had been dwelling on my loss, not his gain, and thence my over-much sorrow. And all these six weeks of absence I had gone about with bowed head and heart, as if there was no light, no more light for me. No wonder my father's words cut keenly, when at last he said so quietly, and yet so sadly, as we sat together in the balcony of our hotel at St. Kilda, "Was all that made you so happy mere sentiment? Has the light gone?—is nothing left?" No wonder that I responded, ashamed to think how I had been dishonouring my Lord,—

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"No, father, no! I am weak and sinful. Jesus still lives; He is the light! Somehow I have forgotten. I will forget no more."

And the next day we went quietly on board the steamer, and back to Adelaide.

Over no smooth sea I came back with my father, to home and the duties awaiting me there. We had a rough and wild passage; fierce winds and tumultuous waves tossed our little vessel, sending it rudely on its homeward track. But it was homeward that every surge of the billows, every blast of the tempest that racked us through and through, most truly bore us. There was comfort in the knowledge that each heaving wave was only bringing us nearer port, and as I lay in my berth, exhausted by the conflict above and below me, I was comforted exceedingly by the remembrance of that other "sweet, sweet home," towards which every sorrow, every grief, like those rough winds, were as surely bearing us.

But my father's words—so quiet, yet so sharp a reproof to this sinful yielding of continued sorrow—still rang in my ears. What had I been doing all these past weeks, that he should have to ask those sad questions? He well might think my former happiness had been mere sentiment; how had I shown that it was not so? Poor old father! that he should have had to carry his own heavy grief alone, and without that hope which ought to have made me rejoice, or, at the least, should have chastened my sorrow. No, the light was not gone, it was only obscured for awhile—Jesus was left, Jesus and His love! How I longed to say all this to my father!
But saying was not enough; in verity, by act and deed, I must shine for Jesus, and prove that His love is all-sufficient both for this life and the life to come.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" The words came over and over again to my memory, though I could not imagine where I had read them. Again and again they returned—the command and the reason given for that command—and to me!

Arise! Yes, I had been down long enough in the dust, the wings of my faith sadly drooping; it must be so no longer. Arise, shine! That was what I had to do, even though the little light I emitted might only emulate the scintillation of the glowworm. I was to shine, to help to brighten the dark places, to testify to the light, and wherefore? Because His light had come to me—the light that is the light of life—and the glory of it had arisen upon me!

I lay tossing about in my berth with every motion of the tempestuous waves, but it was no longer in gloom or darkness. My sorrow for the loss of my brother had not gone, but the light had come from behind the cloud, and the shadow of the grave had passed, for it was illumined by His glory.

And so, when our voyage was nearly ended and I stood on the deck beside my father, my hand on his arm, quietly looking out upon the old familiar shores and watching the waves—that, robbed of half their violence, were still foam-crested and heaving, bearing us swiftly to our haven—he looked contentedly into my face, and smiling, said,—

"Why, Bessie, my child, the storm has done you
good; this face is more like my little girl's of old

time—my little sunbeam!"

"The light has not gone, papa," I answered softly,
go glad to be able to testify to its influence.

So at last we were nearing home. I would not stop
to think what it would be to me without dear Sid,
how I must miss him through the day, and how I should
vaingly listen for his voice. We who had been so
much to each other, whom circumstances had united
more close, and more closely still that band of union
that lay between us as "children of the light" over
which death had no power. I tried to brace myself
up with the remembrance of these things and of Sid's
happiness. There was, I knew, no more sin or suf­
fering for him; joy alone, and that eternal! He was
basking in the full light now, no longer subject to
the clouds that come between; for him there was no
more cloud!

I kept, as I said, these thoughts before me all the
way of our home journey, and I think that father had
no reason to complain of his daughter's lack of cheer­
fulness. Hitherto, I felt, I had been selfish in my
sorrow. It must not be so any more. God helping
me, I would throw myself into my duties, and help to
make bright the home that was still left to me.

We had been absent six weeks, and I knew father
was very anxious to get home. Autumn had been
succeeded by the early days of winter. There was
evidence of his presence as we rode along on either
hand. Rain had fallen heavily, filling the ruts with
water and swelling the creeks to overflowing. In one
place, near home, a small bridge had been completely
washed away, necessitating our taking a long round, and thus lengthening our journey. That did not seem in the least to trouble my father; indeed, to my surprise, he rather eagerly turned into the long route, without a single regret for the fallen bridge. There was a quiet look of satisfaction on his face, which did not become clear to me till long after. On the old route we must have passed the little churchyard in which our precious ones were lying. Dear father, it seems, had been thinking for many a mile how he could avoid this without apparent design. The flood had decided the matter for him.

As we drew nearer and nearer the house, for the moment the memory of that far-off home-coming with Sid, on our return from the "Nest," came almost too forcibly. And yet, then the trees were full of bud and blossom, and the air fragrant with spring flowers. Now the wind howled through the leafless branches, whirling the dry leaves along, hustling them to the sides of the road, where they lay in heaps, mementoes of a past summer.

It was rather a dreary prospect certainly, and scarcely calculated to raise the spirits; but as we came to the end of the avenue, and in sight of the house, there was a little parting of the clouds in the west, and for a few brief moments the setting sun burst forth through its misty curtains, and sent a flood of wavering light over the whole front of the house, illuminating the windows with a pale glory that was very beautiful. To me it brought a word of cheer—Christ, the Light, still lived, and no cloud, whether of sin or suffering, could withstand the glo-
rious flood of His clear shining. I was not going into
the gloom and darkness, but into the pure light of His
presence. And all the light I had, all the light I
could diffuse, must come first from Him.

As we drove up to the door the light was already
fading. The sun had set, but there came a warm,
cheerful glow through the dining-room windows and
the open hall door, where mamma and the children
were all waiting impatiently for us; Gussy was stand­
ing on the steps, and sprang forward eagerly to my side
to lift me from the buggy.

"Glad to get you back, Bessie!" he exclaimed
with a significant hug.

"Have you wanted me, Gussy?" as he took my
shawl from my arms, and ushered me in.

"Wanted is not the name for it!" he returned
heartily. "Anyhow I'm glad you are here—it will seem
a little more like home now." And he went back with
my father to remove the rest of the luggage, while I
ran up the steps to be received with new welcomes and
acclaim by mamma and the children and servants.

As I stood at last in my own room, surrounded by
the old familiar objects, such a tide of recollection
came over me that I was nearly breaking down alto­
gether. Fortunately the remembrance of my father's
words, and the presence of Maude and Lillie, who
were busy with their assistance, roused me to a sense
of what was done; and of what lay before me. I had
already given way enough to grief, sorrowed almost as
though there had been no hope in dear Sidney's death;
and yet I knew it was not so, that no darkness could
come over him any more.
Yes, I believed in this fully; but that was not sufficient—I had to show that I believed in it. Having come into the light myself, I must walk in it so that others might believe. Single-handed it was a hard thing to do. Alone, how was I to grapple with the powers of darkness that were arrayed against me? Alone! No, I was not alone; God was all-sufficient, and my sufficiency was in Him.

All this passed through my mind as my young sisters were busy removing my things, and chatting about some point of great interest to themselves.

"Such wonderful news!" I found at last that Maude was saying—"Bessie, do you hear? Mamma has had letters by the English mail, and has been only watching for papa to come home to tell us all about them."

"What is it all about, Maudie?" I asked, suddenly recovering my powers of attention.

"Ah! we don't know anything for certain yet," said Maude mysteriously. "It is something at any rate that has made mamma glad and sorry and excited all at once. But she won't tell us what it is. She says papa must know first, and that he will have to decide."

"Yes," chimed in Lillie, "and it's something to do with money, I think, from mamma's relations in England, and it concerns her and all us children, though I don't see how it is that you and Gussy and Jemmy are out of it. But I expect we shall have to wait till morning to hear the rest."

"Yes," I returned, smiling, "for papa is tired and will want his tea, and rest. We will not keep him waiting; so come, dears, I am ready."
"And I should think you must be tired and hungry, after such a rough voyage. But you don't look like it," said Maude.

I felt like it, whatever I looked. I was tired at least, and glad to be off the sea. I was tired of its weary tossing and tumbling; but, on the other hand, I was not quite prepared for the confusion of tongues that followed, and I had not quite toned down to the enjoyment of a high tea. They were, however, all so kind, and so glad to see me, and had so many interesting tales of local news to relate, that I roused myself as much as possible, and succeeded very fairly; so much so, that when we separated for the night, Gussy put his arm round my shoulder, and giving me, what he never used to do—a good-night kiss—once more said how jolly it was to have me back, adding that he had all sorts of little jobs awaiting me, saved up against my return, which nobody else could or would do.

It was a good beginning, and a hopeful one. It introduced me to a part of the work that lay before me. If I could but influence my young brother for good, what a joy it would be! His very loneliness had drawn him nearer to me.

I went to bed with a little more insight into what the future had for me. I had all the old threads of work to take up and to interweave them with the new; old duties and new ones to combine. But I was not required to take up the work of the morrow to-day. I had been brought safely over a stormy sea, and now I might rest. The hand that had guided me hitherto would guide and help me still. I need not fear, only trust.
And so at last, wearied out by my voyage and the efforts I had made to be cheerful and bright, I laid my head upon my pillow, thankful for the past, hopeful for the future. I slept a long, deep sleep of entire repose.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST LOOK ROUND.

"Believing in the light."—John xii. 36.

Bare branches and a cloudy sky! That was what I looked out upon from my bedroom window, as I rolled up the blind and put aside the curtain, and stood for a few moments looking out. It was home in its wintry aspects—but home still, even though dear Sidney was absent. I had still to live on just as long as my Heavenly Father appointed; still a round of duties to perform, new or old, as hitherto.

Bare branches and a wintry sky! Yes, but the sun was behind the clouds and there were buds in the bare branches, and cloudy skies betokened fructifying rain, the bud and the blossom and the fruit would all succeed in good time.

Meanwhile, I had simply to go on, day by day, taking up my loose, neglected threads of work or thought, and weaving them slowly in. I was young yet. I had gained strength and health during my absence from home, and something more of hopefulness was springing up in my heart as I stood looking out upon the dry withered leaves that strewed the garden paths, and the great bushes of chrysanthemums, yellow and white and purple, in every shade or tint, which were already fading and dark, under the in-
fluence of cold and rain and wintry storms. They had blossomed splendidly, but their bloom was spent; the gardener had already condemned them. Well, but there would be a new season of bloom for these by-and-by. The dear old garden would renew its beauty, and so there might be hope and even joy for me in the future, for I was, as I said, still young, only one-and-twenty, and with the world before me, and I had given myself to Him in whom is no darkness at all.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come!" Again came those stirring words to my memory, and a thrill of joy even then ran through me at the recollection that all my light, all my warmth was derived, not from within, but from without; from the Sun of Righteousness, whose rays brought healing and health.

It was early yet; and only the servants were up, and maybe Gussy. My father was getting old, and was no longer an early riser, nor, indeed, was it necessary that he should be. I was glad to be alone, for I wanted the first look round by myself entirely. I wanted to familiarize myself with the old things and the old places, and with the absence of one with whom they were all associated.

I turned slowly into our cosy dining-room. I had been there the night before, and had noticed no particular difference there. There was the same crimson carpet, with its intertwining leaves of deeper hue, stretching over the whole length of the floor; the same fine old tiger couchant hearthrug—large and soft, my delight from childhood—before a fire of soft
glowing coals, with a large log for a background, which was pleasant to see on such a winter morning as this. There was nothing new here, save the customary changes—the substitution of the crimson damask curtains for the lace, which threw a warm flush over the room where the wintry sunshine stole in. There was plenty of light, for the windows were large, and locked out on an open part of the garden, where the lawn spread widely, and the flower borders lay back, and a distant peep of the hills broke through the intervening shrubbery. Here the grass was still green and smoothly shaven, for our gardener was proud of his lawns, and took pleasure in the culture and pruning of shrubs and hedges. It was my father’s taste, however, that had opened up the vista through which those hills became visible, at the cost, indeed, of a few fine shrubs, but wonderfully compensating by what was revealed.

Those hills, as I looked at them, reminded me of the “celestial hills,” for the sun coming out from behind a cloud was throwing a veil of glory over them. I was glad they were there; the everlasting hills; they spoke of stability amidst a world of change; they rested me.

I passed out into the parlour. There had been a few changes here; a slight moving of the furniture, a little rearrangement; nothing else besides the winter’s change of drapery, and bright wool antimacasses instead of the lace and muslin of the summer. Outside the window there was indeed one change—the old cane lounge had been removed, dear Sidney’s lounge, and a handsome new one occupied its place.
My eyes filled with tears, and hastily turning away, I slowly walked down the hall, and through the heavy green-baize doors, and stood on the threshold of the little room sacred with so many memories, all associated with my beloved brother. How could I endure the recollections that that room must bring? And yet I felt it would be better for me to familiarize myself at once with the sight. So, with trembling, reluctant tread, I pushed open the half-closed door.

This the room? No, surely I had made a mistake? Not a vestige of the old furniture. Carpets, window drapery—all changed—bright light, gleaming here and there with dashes of gold—a pretty mixture indeed of drab and blue and gold. The very wallpaper corresponded; the shelves of the bookcase had the same drapery and fringe; not a thing was left to remind me of what had been. Yes, there were the pictures; that was out of deference to papa, of course; but dear St. John, how strange he looked in his new setting; I could scarcely recognize him through my tears.

Mamma's doing—I knew that at once; it was like her. She could not endure sorrow or gloom; she hated what she called "morbid memories." "It was enough," she said, "that sickness and death must come; and to perpetuate the gloom they brought was folly." And so she set to work to alter and change, to obliterate all painful recollections, to stamp out the grief, if possible, by fresh surroundings—bright, and new, and glistening.

Poor mamma! would she always be thus able to put away the shadow of the grave from her by such
light means? What if it came nearer home; what if it touched one of her own little ones? What if it came nearer still and chilled her own life?

"False fire!" I thought sorrowfully; "no substitute for the true light, which has no shadow of darkness upon it. There was One, and only One, who had illumined the tomb and dispelled its blackness."

Poor little room! everything so changed. It was pretty, too, prettier far than before, but all the old associations were gone. The old sofa on which dear Sidney had died, the large easy chair which both he and I had found so comfortable in sickness, the little table that had held the fruit, or flowers, or medicine—all gone; and where?

I asked the question of the servant, who was passing at the time and who had paused a moment to close the door, not knowing I was there.

"They have all been sold," she answered. "Missus thought it time that the room should be new furnished, for it would be nice and bright for spring. And it do look nice, don't it, miss?" she added, with admiring glances.

"Yes, Annie," I answered, in a low tone, "but I liked the old room best—just as it was." And closing the door softly behind me, I took down my old hat and a warm wool wrap from a peg in the hall, and walked away into the garden.

I could breathe there, and shed as many tears as I liked, unnoticed.

"No matter," I thought, "Sid, dear Sid! I shall never forget you. Maybe it is as well that I should have less to remind me of the pain and the sorrowing
here, so that I may look beyond and remember that sorrow and pain are over, and the joy and the perfect bliss remain."

That thought gave a new impetus to my footsteps. After all, perhaps this sweeping removal that had caused me such keen pain, this displacing of all that could recall the time of sickness, especially the last sad scene of all, was good for me; perhaps mamma thought it so, for neither that day nor any other time did she refer to the change. It was not her policy so to do, and I could not have spoken of it. I knew that I had been sinfully indulging in sorrow. Now there was renewed action and life before me. If ever my father needed his "sunbeam," it was now. If ever Gussy required a sister's help and companionship, it was in these days of his early manhood, just when home life must seem very lonely to him, and friends without most luring.

I walked up and down with quickened footsteps till I brought the blood freely circulating through my veins, and the elastic rebound to my step. By the time the breakfast bell rang I was myself again, and went into the midst of the gathering group with a smile upon my lips and a colour in my cheek, which my father welcomed as healthful and hopeful signs, for as he kissed me, he laid his hand on my head, with a low-spoken "Bless you, my child," that did me good.

It was an exciting breakfast to us all; for now that mamma had quietly talked over her English letters with my father, she revealed their contents to us. They created quite a ferment. Maude and
Lillie especially could scarcely be restrained, even by the presence of their governess, from giving expression to the wild delight at the new prospects awaiting them.

For Lillie's surmises were right; the news was mainly to do with money. The death of an aunt, of whom mamma had known little, as she had long been estranged from the family, had suddenly made her the heiress of a large annual income; but, to obtain this, it was necessary that she should at once proceed to England, and of course the children could not be left behind; they must go too, and their governess, who was only too happy to accompany them.

But how about father? I saw that he was looking grave, and that his gravity decidedly affected mamma, as from time to time she glanced at him. He had seen the letters and knew every circumstance respecting them; knew that his wife's presence in England was imperative, not only in her own interests, but in those of others. About his own going he had not been quite so sure. He had evidently reasons for thinking that an impossibility.

And so, when the children and their governess left the room, and Gussy and I were alone with mamma and my father, he presently said,—

"You will have to take this voyage without me, Milly. It is as I feared; it would be as foolish for me to go as it is necessary for you."

"Well, but you have not seen the doctor yet, Mr. Bruce," said mamma in surprise. "It is for him to decide that matter; you know, you agreed to that."
"Yes, and I have seen him," replied my father gravely. "I rode down to Dr. Mortimer's before breakfast, since there was so little time for useless delay, and I find it is as I feared. He tells me that I should not live through the voyage, while on land I may have several years before me. So you see, my dear," he added, "for the sake of you all it would be useless running the risk. I do not, however, see why you should burden yourself with all the children," he concluded.

"Oh, yes, I must take them all, I could not be happy without them," cried mamma. "Besides, I want their aunts to see them; they may not have another chance. It may be for their future benefit, you know, James."

My father shook his head sadly. "Well," he said, with a sigh, "it has to be, I suppose; but a year of absence is a long time."

"Oh, it will soon pass, and it could not be done in less time; of course, you know that, my dear? I shall be all the better and stronger for the change, no doubt. You will be glad of that, will you not?"

She looked better already: a very pretty, graceful little woman, with just that shade of delicacy that was infinitely becoming to her. She was many years younger than my father, and there were only a few, a very few, between her and my sister Jenny, and they had unfortunately never fraternized in any respect. Still, we had all got on without any serious disagreement; indeed, on the contrary, we had all agreed remarkably well, all things considered, and I blamed myself for experiencing no sorrow at the
thought of the coming voyage, or rather at the sudden thrill of joy that came with the recollection that for a long twelve months I should have Gussy and my father entirely to myself.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHAOS OF PREPARATION.

"Walking in wisdom towards those that are without."

Col. iv. 5.

"It had to be!" That was my father's verdict; there was no use in setting his face against it when it was inevitable. To Gussy and me the fact that there was anything the matter with him was so entirely unsuspected that it came upon us like a shock. As to mamma—after the first few moments of regret that his health would not allow him to accompany her, she seemed to forget it altogether, and to revel in the thought of the thorough change that awaited her. The voyage home and the revisiting the old scenes of her childhood, the very arrangements of that voyage and its varied equipments were entered into with a zest that seemed to restore half her youth again, and much of her beauty. In a little time she appeared to be quite unconscious of my father's pain, or of anything, indeed, but the brilliant prospects that were awaiting her and her children.

Maude and Lillie entered wildly into the excitement; and it was well that lessons were shortened, for the manifold preparations that were going on took
their governess into the vortex, for it was fully
decided that Miss Upton should go with them, since
father could not, and she also had her outfit to
prepare; though, I believe, my father’s liberality
made it comparatively easy for her. But, lighten
the labours as we might by visits to Adelaide and by
packets of ready-made garments of all kinds, there
was still much confusion, much packing, and even
much needlework to be done. Two or three dress-
makers, besides our own services, were required to
reduce matters to anything like order in time for the
next outgoing steamer.

Jenny often drove over and gave her help in the
household arrangements. She was not, as she said,
much good at needlework, excepting at the very
plainest sewing and hemming. Her turn of mind
was decidedly practical. She was a splendid cook;
hers tact in household details could not be excelled.
But in all fine work, in those delicate touches of beau-
tifying and embellishing, she was entirely deficient.

“If I must have needlework, give me some sheets
or towels—something for the machine; or let me
have the packing, I can do that,” she said, laughing,
one morning. “Bessie can do more with her left
hand on the children’s dresses than I with right and
left together.”

It was just a natural gift with me. I could take
up an idea, or imitate a fashion, or turn or twist a bit
of lace or ribbon to effect; and of course I knew it,
and was willing to use my power to the utmost.
Jenny said she was only afraid that that “utmost”
was very trying to me.

So many days of it! Yes, it was trying, for
mamma was so excited, and at last had one of her bad attacks in the middle of the work, and for two or three days could do nothing at all. But during those two or three days Jenny was almost constantly with us; and with her good system of organization and Miss Upton's quiet, but efficient help, and my own "utmost" endeavours, we did more than we had done for a fortnight previously, so that mamma, who had sadly bemoaned not only her own suffering but loss of time, was fairly astonished by what we had accomplished.

"If only papa, and you, and Gussy were going," said Maude one evening, as she sat crouching on the window seat of the dining-room, just before tea, and between the lights. Without it was gloomy enough; and yet we had turned from the comfortable room where the servant was already arranging the table, from the ruddy light of the fire that was sending its warm glow over the pictures on the walls, and the silver on the table, and sparkling in bright points among the lustres that hung from the chandelier. And there we sat, Maudie and I, looking out on the wet, sodden lawn and the hills in a mist beyond, watching the drops of rain as they fell from the leaves, and the little bubbles as they danced and gleamed in the puddles along the garden path and at the corner of the verandah posts.

"We cannot have all our wishes, Maudie," I answered in a low, half-dreamy voice. "Perhaps it would not be quite well if we could. I dare say it seems hard to you that papa cannot go with you; but as to Gussy and I, we should be rather in the way, I fancy. You are going to mamma's relations, to your
own uncles and aunts, you know, dear; and we have nothing to do with this money that comes to you and mamma. You understand this, of course?"

"Oh, yes, I quite understand it now," said Maude slowly; "but it does not prevent my wishing you could go with us, dear sister Bessie; and I have been wanting you so dreadfully all these weeks you were away, and since then everything has been in such a whirl that I have scarcely had time to think even."

"Have you been wanting me, too, Maudie?" I asked, with a closer clasp to the arms that entwined my waist.

"Yes, Bessie, I have wanted you so badly, I could not go to any one else, and I have felt very lonely, and very miserable."

"About what, Maudie?"

"About what we used to think about before dear Sidney died," she answered in a low voice. "Often when you went away I used to lie awake at night, thinking, if it had been I instead of Sid, where should I have been?"

"Ah! God has taken him into the full light of His city; He has spared you, Maudie," I answered, my eyes full of tears. "Perhaps He is leading you by this very trial into the light."

"It does not seem light."

"No; but you see the darkness, and it is distasteful; that is a step forward towards the light. You see this much, dear Maudie, that you are a sinner and that you want a Saviour. Do you not?"

"Oh, Bessie, yes." And the head, with its fair soft curls, was laid on my shoulder.

"You are willing to come to Christ the light?"
"Yes, oh yes! but I don't know how to come!"

"If you were in any great trouble, dear Maudie, do you think you would hesitate to go to father, and ask him to help you?"

"No; I am sure I should not; but this—oh, this seems so different!"

"Yes, it is different, but the difference is all on the right side; for Jesus, our Father, is able to help to the uttermost,—able and willing, too, dear Maudie. Do you think He would say, 'Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' if He was not just as willing to receive you as you to come?"

"Does He mean just that, Bessie?" she asked, in eager surprise.

"Just that. He means you to take Him at His word, Maudie, just to take yourself and all your sins to Him. Tell Him exactly what you want: light, that you may understand His word and see your way, and help in all the little difficulties as well as the large ones; mind that, dear Maudie, nothing is too small for His notice," I whispered, for I heard mamma's footstep, and I knew she was sadly afraid of what she termed "depressing influences" for Maudie, and of late she had been rather jealously observant of our intercourse. Maudie knew this, too, perhaps from more definite intimation than had reached me, for with one hasty hug and kiss she slid down from the window seat on which she had been crouched—with her feet tucked under her—as we talked, disappearing through one door as mamma entered by the other.

It was almost the last opportunity afforded me for even a word touching the light towards which dear
Maudie’s young eyes were so eagerly turned. I had to leave it there, prayerfully, and not without hope. The seed was sown; God could alone give the increase, and no adverse teaching could resist His power.

“Depressing influences!” It was the keynote to all poor mamma’s actions. I remembered the time of my own illness, and how she had left home with the children for fear there might be infection, though the doctor repeatedly assured her there was no danger of any, and how thorough a course of renovation, cleansing, and painting, and fumigating every place and thing had undergone before she ventured to return. It had been the same all along; the changes of arrangements and furniture during the few weeks of our absence in Victoria sufficiently proved how she detested to linger in the shadow. But this, alas! was not a thirsting after the true light, it was a mere morbid shrinking from sickness and death, an ignoring, in fact, anything connected with a future life, because of the gloom with which she imagined the subject was surrounded. And, alas! to her religion was a gloomy thing—she failed to see its brightness, and light and glory—because she saw it not in the face of Jesus Christ.

And what could I do? Nothing I could say on the subject would have been listened to, or indeed permitted. All that I could venture on was a word now and then to my young sisters and brothers, who all clung round sister Bessie, continually expressing a wish that she was going with them. Poor children! how little power had sister Bessie to do them any good, and how fast the time was passing away.
As the time drew nearer for their departure, I noticed with pain that my father was suffering greatly, more than he chose to reveal. He was very fond of his wife, and the children were all very dear to him, and it was a heavy trial that he was obliged to stay behind, or that they were compelled to go. Once or twice, indeed, he seemed inclined to put the doctor’s orders on one side, and to go at whatever cost. On one occasion, when in Adelaide, mamma induced him to consult an eminent medical man, hoping that his advice would annul the verdict of the other. But it was of no avail; his opinions exactly coincided with those Dr. Mortimer had expressed, only he spoke less hopefully, and particularly urged the avoidance of all great exertion or excitement; so though mamma affected to laugh at his fears, and tried to make him think the parting was a mere nothing, that the time would go so fast that they would be back again before he missed them, the clouds still deepened across his brow, and he every day was more visibly oppressed.

"It is a jolly good thing that this is nearly over," said Gussy the evening before the departure. The luggage had been sent forward under safe convoy, and was already aboard; and nothing remained but for the whole family to follow on the morrow. Father, Gussy, and I were to see them off, and the children had been dismissed early to bed, that they might be up in good time in the morning.

"You are right, Gussy," I answered in a low voice; "all this excitement, and the thought of the separation is sadly affecting poor father. It is very hard for him. I shall be thankful when it is
over and he can rest, and have time to grow stronger."

But the next day was more trying than any of the previous ones. We were prepared for that. It was more trying because father endeavoured to appear quite calm and resigned; but as we travelled along I saw the tears come into his eyes many times, as they fell upon his wife, looking so well and so pretty and even young, in her new travelling-dress, or when they rested on the children, the bright, fair-haired girls and boys who clustered round him, as though they were determined he should not be left behind. I could scarcely bear it myself, for it did seem a hard thing, and yet how could I wish him to go? Even for his own sake I could not.

It was a terrible time, that last half-hour that we spent on board. Gussy and I made our adieus to mamma and kissed the children over and over again, and then went on shore, there to await father, deeming sacred the last few moments he had to spend with them. Then came the cry, "All ashore!" The bell rang out loud and shrill. I saw my father's white head bared to the sun and gleaming like silver as he entered the little boat—for the vessel lay out from the wharf. A few moments more and he was by our side, pale and with compressed white lips, his hat still in his hand, and his handkerchief slightly waving to the dear ones on board in his almost nerveless fingers.

There we stood, on either side of him, terribly afraid that he would fall, but not daring to speak; and thus we remained till every vestige of the vessel had dis-
appeared, till even the long trail of smoke that floated in her wake had vanished. Then my father passively allowed us each to take him by the arm and lead him away, his stiff lips murmuring as we did so,—

"I shall never see them any more!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED.

"Walking circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise."

Eph. v. 15.

Out over the wide ocean went the mail steamer on its homeward voyage with its freight of passengers. We stayed one night in Adelaide, for father was too exhausted to go on, even had there been time. In the early morning we started for our quiet home—doubly quiet now after the noise and confusion and excitement of the last few weeks.

It was winter still, but far on in July, and the sun sometimes shone pleasantly out in the middle of the day, and there were little evidences of the coming spring here and there, which to me were very delightful. In some places along the road I noticed that the wattel was coming into bloom. In a few sheltered spots there were already almond-trees in blossom, scattering their leaves like tiny snowflakes under the branches. The air felt soft and balmy, and as we left Adelaide and wound in and out among the hills its pureness and freshness was exceedingly welcome. I do not think my father noticed it, for he sat leaning back in his seat, leaving the reins and the box to Gussy, for we only took the buggy back with us.
Our family trap was left behind in Adelaide for sale. "If we should ever want one again, we will buy a new one," father had said. So we journeyed back in the hooded buggy. Sometimes I sat with father, but oftener with Gussy on the box-seat, for father seemed to prefer being alone and had no inclination to talk, and Gussy, full of his own wild spirits, wanted a little restraining.

"It is hard for father," I softly said. I had said it many times, but I wanted to cool down a little of the ebullition of Gussy's spirits, which I was afraid would be painful to him—to my father, I mean. "Depend upon it, Gussy," I continued, "he feels mamma's going terribly, even though it is but for a time, and I am very anxious about him, for there must really be something very wrong in the matter if a voyage would kill him. I have thought he has not been strong for a long time, but I have never heard him complain? Have you?"

"Yes, once or twice; after climbing a hill or lifting a weight—nothing more," Gussy returned in a low voice, turning suddenly grave. "But, Bessie," he continued, "I don't think there can be anything very wrong, for Dr. Mortimer says he may live many years."

"He does not seem to think that himself," I returned, with a sudden frightened recollection of the words he uttered as he turned away from the wharf: "I shall never see them again!"

"Oh! that was only because he was low-spirited. Why, surely, Bessie, you don't attach any meaning to words of that sort?"
"No, certainly not," I answered; "it would be foolish to do so; and it will be a poor way of comforting father by making ourselves miserable," I added. "As you say, it is, perhaps, only that he is feeling low about this parting, and that makes him look at the dark side of everything. We must try and make it less lonely for him, poor father!"

We had started early for home, but had taken the journey very leisurely, stopping for two or three hours in the middle of the day at a wayside hotel; and while father lay on the sofa asleep (I think he must have slept little during the night), Gussy and I strolled about the neighbouring hills and gullies, searching for fern-roots. There was no doubt about it, father was both physically and mentally exhausted, and he was in no hurry to get back to the quiet home that awaited us. But for his evident despondency it would have seemed very pleasant to me—the quiet and the calm after all the bustle and confusion. As to Gussy, he did not scruple to declare that "it would be something like home now, and he didn't see why we could not make ourselves jolly over our freedom."

"Freedom!" I exclaimed, laughing at his nonsense. "In what way, may I ask, were you bound before?"

"In a dozen different ways. I can now speak above a whisper—"

"I think you generally could do that!" I interrupted.

"I can bring a fellow home to dinner or tea, if I want," he continued, not noticing my interruption. "Oh, I can do plenty of things that I couldn't do before, and you know it, Bess."
"I thought you always could bring nice 'fellows' home when you wanted," I rejoined. "Mamma did not object; and you would not wish to bring any other into your father's house?"

"Certainly not; and of course the mater would say nothing—that was the thing—she made no objection, but then she was never pleasant. She never cared to make one's friends feel at home; she didn't make them welcome—you know she didn't, Bessie—and so they thought they were intruding, and wouldn't come a second time when I asked them. It will be different now, for I know you won't snub them."

"I hope I shall never do that," I replied, nearly breaking the blade of my pocket-knife in trying to uproot a graceful little fern.

Nevertheless, I did not like all Gussy's friends, and thought they decidedly wanted weeding. I cared little especially for the company of Frank Miller, who, though at least four or five years my brother's senior, appeared much attached to him. He always had been a very frequent, free-and-easy visitor; he lived so near to us that a neighbourly intercourse had existed as long as I can remember. He was as lively as ever, full of droll speeches and laughter, "coming in with a laugh and going out with a roar," as Gussy always said of him, for if he did not roar, he made others roar in spite of themselves. He ignored mamma's cool reception—and she could be very frigid when she chose—but he generally succeeded in making her smile, whether she would or not.

I disliked Frank Miller's visits for more than one reason. He was an irreligious young man, if nothing:}
worse, inclined to ridicule everything sacred; and though in my presence he continually checked what was evidently too constant a practice to be readily laid aside, I knew that it was simply out of deference to me, and I was sorry to see how strong an influence he had over Gussy and his immature opinions.

Out of deference to me? I did not like the motive. It was not that he saw the hatefulness of the deed or recognized it as sin; he simply wished to stand well in my opinion. That was exactly it. He was too presuming; he had no warrant for supposing his attentions or deference acceptable. Yet he evidently did, or, at any rate, wished them to be so.

I thought over this as I went on gathering my ferns, and wished that both Gussy and I could be rid of this young man's companionship. I could see so little chance of doing him good, so much of the evil that he might bring. And yet it needed circumspection, it needed wisdom. I wished to win my brother, not to repel him by offering opposition to his friendship. But I could not behave foolishly or act a part, and in order for right action in this matter I must seek for wisdom where it would not be likely to fail me. Gussy evidently so firmly relied upon me for the pleasant entertainment of his friends, that it seemed to me I should find it in this case a difficult matter to please him without giving encouragement where it would be equally wrong and deceitful, as well as repugnant to my feelings, to do so.

However, I had no need to trouble about that now, Gussy was as busy as myself making his selection of
roots, and when we rejoined one another with our treasures, and went back to the hotel, he had apparently forgotten our conversation and was full of nothing but his acquisitions for the fernery at home—a small house of his own erecting and workmanship, in a sheltered place near the dear old willow creek, over which he had lately spent many a leisure hour.

We found father waiting for us, and as anxious now to start as he had been desirous of remaining before. The buggy was already before the door; so carefully packing our ferns in wet moss and weeds, and disposing them under the seat in an empty box, we were presently proceeding swiftly along on the homeward route.

The clouds were gathering slightly in the west, and the sun went down in a misty haze that betokened change of weather. I saw father once looking anxiously at the sun setting, and knew too well where his thoughts were.

"There is one thing certain," I presently said in a cheerful voice, "we can't judge a bit what kind of weather there is on the sea by what there is on land."

"No," chimed in Gussy, "we may have it wild enough on shore, and on the sea it may be as smooth as a mill-pool. It's only along the coast that we may judge of the weather by the land breezes."

"Yes; you are right," said my father; and I thought he cheered up a bit after that. And though that evening as we sat at tea—an extra nice tea that Mary had prepared for the master's home-coming—the windows rattled as the wind rushed round the
house, and rain beat against the panes and made the fire that glowed on the hearth very acceptable, he did not resume the anxious look that for a few moments bore him down. Once, indeed, I heard him murmur, as he drew aside the curtain for a minute and looked out into the night,—

"It may be—probably is—quite fine on the sea."

"Father, dear," I ventured, with a trembling heart, as I gave him a good-night kiss, "isn't it good to know that God is on the sea as well as the land, that the winds and the waves are all under His control, and that He is ever ready to hear us?"

"It is good, my child, to have your simple faith," he answered, turning away. "And maybe," he added, "you are right."

It was something gained, even that acknowledgment. I went to sleep with wet eyes, but they were not tears of unhappiness. It might be that the very cross that my dear father was bearing might lead him to Christ; and when I thought of his silver hairs and the illness that threatened him, how earnestly I prayed that it might be so!

Many times in the night I woke, and heard the rain plashing up against my window, and the wind go sighing round the house, brushing the rose-sprigs up and down the panes, and my heart went forth in earnest prayer for those on the sea, that one and all might be blessed and kept and taught to cling in simple faith to Christ alone.

My path—my new path—was before me. How I needed, indeed, Divine guidance that I might walk circumspectly, doing nothing without prayer, not
acting with foolish haste or without forethought, and, above all, seeking day by day the wisdom that cometh from on high to rule, to regulate my words and actions, my whole being, my life.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAWN OF BETTER THINGS.

"Walking in love."—Eph. v. 3.

For a whole week my father went listlessly about the house and grounds, unable to settle to any employment, or to fall into the broken routine of every-day work. It was pitiable to see him so depressed. I did my best to cheer him, and to draw him away from the thoughts that were too heavy for him. At first, however, he kept very much away by himself, and I almost despaired of gaining any influence over him or doing him any service. But at last, by degrees, he began to come into the dining-room in the evening, as soon as the air grew chilly, just before the lights came. I took care that there should always be a bright little fire to welcome him, and his large chair drawn up in readiness. Sometimes a friend would drop in to tea, and make a little stir and change in our quiet life—Jenny and her husband, or the doctor, and now and then our clergyman.

But one evening, when there was no one with us, after the tea-things were removed, I went quietly into the parlour, where a pleasant fire was also burning, and sat down at the piano to play and sing as I used to do for Sidney. It was hard at first, and
I could scarcely have carried out my resolve had not the gloaming concealed the tears that would come with the memory. But I was well rewarded for my efforts when, the second evening, I heard my father come quietly into the room, and, seating himself in his large arm-chair, lean back in its depths, quietly listening.

My voice shook a little; but what an earnest prayer I breathed for wisdom in selection—for something that would reach my father's heart, and waken some echoes of the past! I was singing the dear old familiar "Rock of Ages" when he first came in. It had been a great favourite of my own mother's, and it was that, I think, attracted him to the room; though he always did like to hear me sing, and I remember on one occasion he had said to Sidney,—

"Bessie has a sweet voice; it is very much like what your mother's was at her age."

So I sang "Rock of Ages" to the end—softly and soothingly—and then, after allowing my fingers to wander in a little symphony of my own over the keys, I took up another strain—Mrs. Elliot's sweet words,—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee—
Oh, Lamb of God, I come."

How the words entered my own soul, lending strength and pathos to my voice! So simple, so easy this coming to Christ seemed to me as I sang. Oh, how I hoped that it would prove as clear to my father!
I could not tell how he had taken it, for as I played the few parting chords I heard him rise from his chair and go quietly out. I gently closed the piano, and went up to my room. The seed-sowing was all that I could do; the harvest was in God's hands.

After that, whenever we were alone in the evening I made a practice of singing in the gloaming before the lights were needed. I always loved that time “between the lights,” when hands had liberty to be idle and limbs to rest—a time of all others, so it appeared to me, when the heart is most open to holy influences, and God seems so near. It was at such times I used to play for Sidney as he lay on the old cane lounge beneath the window, and perhaps for that reason I felt it to be so. It was for my father now I played, though he never made any remark, but either sat quietly in his great arm-chair, or, as the evenings grew warmer and the windows were open later, walked slowly up and down the verandah, with his hands clasped behind him, up and down, till the last chord was struck, and then he went quietly back again to the dining-room to his book or his newspaper.

It was quiet, very quiet, no doubt, but we had known it so before. Mamma and the children went away every summer for a few weeks at the seaside; it had always been her custom to do so. When I was the children’s governess I used to go too, and Jenny, before she was married, always kept house. So really, the quiet was not without precedent. It was, of course, the distance and the length of time that was to intervene made all the difference.
Father himself was a quiet man—I could not remember him as anything else—and as long as I had anything to do with things the children had very much to be kept out of the way and as quiet as possible, particularly for mamma's sake; therefore I was not without hope that he would soon become reconciled to the present way of life, and hearing from the Cape (for in those days we did not traverse the ocean so rapidly as in the present time, and it was from the Cape we looked for letters), he would make up his mind to the inevitable absence, and fall into the old routine. Till these letters came I had but little hope that he would regain his spirits, and for these, then, must be a time of waiting.

We had not, after all, so long to wait. One evening I took my work, some simple frilling that did not require much care, and walked slowly up and down the avenue towards the large gates; for Gussy had gone to the neighbouring township—to the blacksmith's, I think, to get one of the horses shod—and knowing that he would call at the post-office, and thinking it possible that he might bring me letters from some of my friends, or that, at any rate, there were magazines and newspapers due, I sauntered up and down, awaiting his arrival.

Four weeks had gone slowly by since we watched the steamer out of sight, carrying its freight of precious human souls, in which we were so much interested, far away from our shores. A weary time for father; but I had my own every-day work to take up, to overlook the household, and see that all went straight. There was responsibility in the under-
taking; for though I had an excellent assistant in dear old Mary, our cook, who was ever ready with her help or advice in time of need, there were yet many things I had been accustomed to do that helped to make the days less monotonous, and kept me from morbidly dwelling on the past.

We were just at the end of August now, and though the first part of the month had been very wet, yet now the spring weather seemed to burst upon us, and two or three pleasant, sunshiny days had dried up the pools, sparkled in the waters of the creek, and added blossoms to the trees in the garden, making everything look beautiful, and gladdening my heart.

The almond blossoms had all fallen, leaving young green almonds behind, but there were pink and white apple blossoms appearing here and there in the orchard. The acacias had not flowered yet, but they were already clothing themselves in green, and the sun came glinting down between the young feathery branches over my head, throwing a pale green light around my path.

My work lay listlessly in my fingers; the twittering of the birds, the quivering of the leaves, the very fragrance of the flowers, were too potent in their influence to allow of anything but thought. I went and leaned on the large gates, looking towards the grave-yard where dear Sidney was placed. I could not see the spot, but from where I stood the spire of the little church was visible, gleaming through the trees; it had caught some of the rays of the setting sun.

Dear Sidney! how I still missed him, how every
place still seemed filled with his presence! But I had struggled against the rebellious sorrow that had so long prostrated me; I could now rejoice for him, and look forward one day to a happy reunion. I remembered his words, too, "If rest is given to me, and work for you, dear Bessie, there will be light for the work."

After all, what work was I doing? The tears came into my eyes as I asked myself that question. What was that work I had to do? And then came Sidney's words again, "You must take Gussy under your care, he wants a sister's help; he is so impulsive, so easily led away; a rough diamond—needing a little polish—but I have strong hope for him. He is thinking; you must help him to work his thoughts out."

Had I done this? No; till that moment I had forgotten both Sidney's words and the hint they contained. Was Gussy "thinking" still; or, poor fellow, had the thoughts been put on one side, and earthly subjects and objects interposed, for want of the "word in season"?

I bowed my head down upon the rail and prayed, "Oh, Father, leave me not to my own poor devices, or I shall never shine for Thee." Ah! it is ever thus; our light is derived, not from ourselves, but from Him; and only as we have this light in our own hearts—over our own lives—can we diffuse it. Surely my little light for a season had been hidden.

Along the road came Gussy. I heard the sharp trot of the pony, old Star, as we called him, from the small white spot on his forehead. I heard the sweet,
melodious whistle of my brother ringing out on the evening air; but I had by this time forgotten all about letters and papers, amidst the multitude of other thoughts; and as he approached, and his fine stout figure was clearly defined by the mellow, soft-tinted sky behind him, now fast fading into evening's mystic light, I only thought of my forgotten duty and how I should resume it; how in all love I should win my brother—this other dear brother that was still left me—to the feet of the Saviour.

He came up with a merry shout, a laugh of pleased surprise, as I threw the gates widely open.

"Why, Bess," he exclaimed as he rode in, and then, turning round, stood while I closed the gates after him, "one would think you were expecting good news!"

"No," I replied, smiling back at him. "No; I stood here simply for my own pleasure, and to watch for you. Have you got any news for me?"

"Yes; I have. But I've a package for father in here that he didn't expect, and it will do him good. It is from 'far out at sea,' brought by a passing vessel!"

And Gussy swung himself off his horse, throwing the reins over its neck and leaving it to find its own way to the stable, which it always did, and with the post-bag in his hand went in, while I followed him joyfully exclaiming,—

"Oh, Gussy! what good news! How glad I am! and what will it be for father?" as we entered the dining-room together.

There sat father in his great arm-chair, which was drawn up near the window. He was sitting quite
still with a book in his hand; but he was not reading, it was too dark for that; and though the lamp was lighted, it was turned down so low that there was only a very faint circle of light just in its vicinity.

As Gussy threw down the letter-bag and began to toss out the letters, I turned up the lamp to be in readiness for action, and then taking the precious packets, at a sign from my brother, exclaimed rejoicingly,—

"Here, father dear, this is unexpected. A letter from mamma, far out at sea, by the Vermont, a passing vessel."

My father rose erect, yet trembling, and turning very pale as he stretched out his hand eagerly for the packets.

"From sea!" he exclaimed bewildered, and yet recognizing the familiar writing.

"Yes, father," said Gussy, "a lucky chance, I suppose. It is often done." And then we left him to the enjoyment of his unexpected news; but not before I had heard the low-breathed "Thank God!" with which he read the first few lines; and by that I knew that all was well.

Dear father, how he brightened up after that letter! Short though it was, it bridged over the time. It would not seem so long to wait for the rest. A little hope is a wonderful medicine. Nevertheless, I was sadly uneasy at times for my father's health. He seemed to grow thinner and whiter every day, or I fancied so; and that cough of his was very troublesome. Had he taken fresh cold? I made up
my mind to waylay Dr. Mortimer, and coax him to tell me what he really thought of father, and if he was really seriously ill.

CHAPTER VI.

GUSSY'S OPINION.

"Walking in truth."—2 John i. 4.

A FEW weeks later on the spring came in with full beauty, and the flowers in the garden were lovely. There was a rich promise of fruit everywhere, and every breath of the warm air came laden with fragrance. October had even brought with it one or two hot winds, though from these we were nicely sheltered, and they did us little harm, on the contrary clearing the atmosphere, and drying away those germs of disease that go floating about in the air, alighting on the predisposed with sure tenacity.

I think the heat coming on so suddenly was rather trying to father. He stayed more at home than he used, lying about either on the sofa inside the house or on the new lounge without. He had taken Sidney's place, and yet he made no complaint, and tried to talk indifferently on general subjects; but I often thought it cost him an effort, and that his mind was elsewhere while he talked.

I still played and sang for him every evening, sometimes going over the old familiar tunes and words, at other times bringing in more modern ones. I knew that he enjoyed the quiet hours, for if I was a little later than usual he would call me, and if I had happened to omit one of his favourites for a day or
two he would ask for it. He never seemed tired of hearing "Rock of Ages," or "Just as I am," however frequently sung. I noticed another thing also. The large old Bible that used to lie under its green baize cover, back on the sideboard in the dining-room, had disappeared; and one day, having occasion to go into my father's study, I found it lying upon the table open, and a book-marker resting upon its leaves. My heart gave a great leap of thanksgiving. Was the "light" indeed piercing the darkness? Oh, how I rejoiced at the tokens!

With Gussy I had had but little chance, for father's disinclination for business, or inability to attend to it personally, threw a great deal of work on his young shoulders. But he was a clever boy, and always had been; indeed he was fast losing even the appearance of a boy—the hair on both lip and chin were wonderfully transforming. He had grown so tall, too, and looked so strong and well. No doubt constantly riding or walking about in the open air contributed to this. And when he did come home he was so bright and cheerful that he was like a gleam of sunshine in our midst.

The worst of it was I never could get him alone. We had, as I said, no chance of a word together, for when he was at home he always had either one or another of his friends with him. They were nice enough young fellows most of them, but as far as I knew not calculated to do him much real good, any one of them. Frank Miller had lately found some pretext or other for coming in and out, whether Gussy was at home or not, and greatly to my annoy-
ance, and I think rather to my father's discomfort. He often came while I was playing in the evening, and, taking a seat by the window unasked, would talk to my father, thus preventing him from listening to the words, watching me at the same time, till in sheer desperation I would softly close the piano, and, slipping out at a side door, would take care not to appear again till I was quite certain he had left the house.

"You don't seem to care for young Miller's company," said my father, on one of these occasions, with a twinkle of his eye, as I came quietly in to supper after one of these enforced absences.

"No, father, dear!" I answered, with a slight accession of colour, "I certainly do not."

"And what particular objection have you to him, may I ask?"

"In any case, I do not think I could like him; he is not the sort of man to command one's respect," I replied; "but I can have no feeling in common with one who ridicules God's Word and holds all sacred things lightly as he does."

"Well, if he can't understand the hint, he is more obtuse than I thought him," responded my father, looking grave. "But I'm glad you feel so, Bessie, my child; I should not care to part with my little girl in that direction."

"You never will, papa!" I answered in a low voice, yet so decisively that my father laughed, exclaiming, "I see there is no fear."

If only I could have got rid of him quietly, without any further trouble, how glad I should have
been; but I doubted his taking a hint so readily, and every day I was becoming more and more conscious of the bent of his determination. All I could do was to ward off the evil, and there was something cowardly even in that. I did, indeed, feel sorry that this precious evening hour, the hour of all others when dear father seemed more especially mine, should be disturbed—sacrilegiously disturbed, I thought it—by Frank Miller and his vagaries. But after awhile I began to question the right I had to curtail the hour on account of my own discomfort. It was certainly a cross to continue to sing with the accompaniments of light words and laughter, and the consciousness that all the time the eyes of the young man were not on my father, with whom he was talking, but on me. But I was enabled to take up the cross and go forward, for who could tell whether the motives that had prompted him to break in upon our quiet hour might not be overruled for his good? and the remembrance that it was not for myself, but for Jesus, I was singing, gave me courage to go on. But when the last chord was struck that I intended to play, I gave no warning, just stealing from the room, and not appearing again till he was safely out of the house.

After awhile he grew tired of such an unsatisfactory state of things, and left our quiet hour unmolested, coming indeed quite as often, but at other times in the day. It required great skill on my part to avoid the tête-à-tête for which he was evidently trying, and which I hoped my marked coolness would teach him to avoid as useless.
Gussy, who had, I must say, shown himself remarkably obtuse in the matter, at last betrayed signs of suspicion. He had come home one morning rather early, and found Frank Miller seated near the lounge on which father was lying, while I, on a low stool some distance off, was preparing some raspberries for the cook, my fingers all rosy with the process. Father had a little basket of the fruit before him, a plate and spoon, and a small pitcher of cream. Both of these had been offered to the visitor and declined. I left my father to do the duty of host, and kept quietly on with my self-imposed task, which I could not conveniently leave, joining as little in the conversation as possible.

I saw that Gussy took in the situation at a single glance,—and after standing a few moments chatting and laughing, and stealing a few raspberries from my dish, he took Frank off to the stables to see a young foal of which he was the fortunate possessor, and which, according to the best authorities, bid fair to prove very valuable.

I was sitting alone when he came back, having seen Frank fairly off the premises; father had gone indoors to his study. He came and placed himself before me, making another onslaught upon the raspberries, and presently said, in a slow, dry way,—

"Am I to understand that you encourage this state of things, Bessie?"

"As, for instance, your stealing the raspberries?" I asked, looking up at him with a smile, though very well assured that was not his meaning.

"How long has Frank taken to pay you morn-
ing visits?" he asked, ignoring the raspberry question.

"Morning visits?" I answered. "I fancy we are not secure from those visits at any part of the day. I think your friend must be shamefully neglecting his business, Gussy."

"That's his own affair," said Gussy rather grandly, taking upon himself the duty of elder brother. "The thing is, not the time he wastes, but what hand have you in his wasting it?"

"None!" I answered, with raised colour and decided accent. "Or, if I must speak plainly, his visits are exceedingly disagreeable to me. I thought you would have found that out, though for your sake I have tried to be civil."

"Well, I confess I have thought that you have treated Frank in a rather stand-off manner of late, but I was not up to the reason. So he comes at all hours, does he? That looks as if he meant mischief." And he sat down on the stool at my side and was silent a moment.

"I always did like Frank," he presently went on. "I liked him because he was good company, and could make a fellow laugh, and was always ready for a lark. But it's another thing," he added deliberately, "to wish to give him one's sister."

"Especially when the sister has no intention to be given," I said significantly.

"Exactly so; and I'm very glad of it. I should despise you, Bess, if you had," he answered vehemently. "Frank Miller, with his notions about religion, would never do for you."
"Does it do for you, Gussy?" I asked in a serious tone. He hesitated a moment—only a moment—and then he answered emphatically,—

"No! it does not do for me. I'm a harum-scarum fellow—very little good in me—none, indeed! but it does not suit me to hear the book which dear old Sid valued so much, which made him contented to live and happy to die, made fun of and ridiculed and blasphemed, however little I attend to its words myself; and I'd rather lose the best friend I have than see you married to a man of that stamp!"

"Gussy," I said, my eyes filling with tears at even this avowal of his feelings, "there is no fear that anything like that will ever happen. Frank Miller and I can never have anything in common with each other, and I wish he could find that out. But, Gussy," I continued, rising and placing my hand on his arm to detain him, for in saying the last words he had jumped up, overturning the stool as he did so, and was going off, "don't you think it is worth while to attend to the words of that book yourself, as well as respecting them for dear Sid's sake?"

"More easily said than done, Bess!" he answered rather roughly—to hide his feelings, I thought. "I'm afraid I've not the makings of a saint in me. I can see what's wrong fast enough, but I run slap-dash into it nevertheless. I'm a different sort of a fellow to poor Sidney; I can't see that he was ever far wrong."

"He did not tell you that."

"No; he always made out that he had been all wrong till he came to the 'Light,' but I couldn't see
it. He was a splendid fellow, was Sid! It's I that ought to have gone, not he."

"Do you really think so, Gussy?" I asked in a low voice.

"Well, so far as his being wanted here, I mean," he replied, half-way down the steps by this time. "Of course it would have been a bad thing for me. Ah well!" he continued, affecting to yawn, as though tired of the subject, "this won't take me to Amble-side. Father thinks you want horse-exercise, so see what I'll bring home to-night: the prettiest little pony you've seen one while, and splendidly broken in—" and with a wave of his hat he was off.

It was an opening, however, and I was thankful for it. Thankful for the stand he was inclined to take on the side of truth, though he was loath to admit it. He had been thinking, then? He was thinking still; and Sidney's words, and Sidney's deeds, and the pure, true light that his memory had left, were still influencing his brother. I praised God that night, and took courage.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR LIFE OR FOR DEATH.

"Where is your faith?"—Luke viii. 25.

Meanwhile time sped on, and one day the ocean mail came in, bringing its freight of longed-for letters to us—letters from the Cape, but by the time they reached us those who wrote them would, in all probability, be on English shores. The next letters would be direct from the old country.
I was so glad for father; he enjoyed the reading of those letters so much. Mamma was so greatly improved in health, and had suffered so little by seasickness, and the children were in fine condition, both as to health and spirits. There were little letters from all three girls—letters for papa—and a private packet for me. Maude's was intended for my inspection only, at least the postscript, which had been hastily written, and as hastily thrust in and gummed down. I could scarcely make out the words when I had, with great care, succeeded in opening the envelope; but when I did decipher them it was with tears in my eyes that I read,—

"Oh, Bessie, dear, I haven't forgotten a bit all you've so often talked to me about, and I do still want to love Jesus; but it's so hard on board ship; there's no place to one's self, and everything to take off one's thoughts and make one forget. But I'm so glad of one thing you told me—that we may pray anywhere, and God hears us just the same. Don't forget to pray for your loving sister, Maudie."

The little, hurried scrawl, so hastily tucked in and gummed down, told its own tale. Dear Maudie, she was going forth into temptation; but God was able to water this little germ of truth and to preserve it alive, and all that I could do was to pray that it might be so.

The letters were a great pleasure to father, but he did not gain strength or vigour. It was a trying summer, clear, rainless skies, hot winds sweeping down upon us, parching up the grass, withering down the flowers, and taking the strength out of the
strongest among us. No wonder the weak or the ailing suffered. Yet father had never so suffered before; and I saw at last that even our good doctor looked concerned at the prostration and languor, on which his tonics seemed powerless to produce effects.

I had vainly tried to waylay the doctor, and to get his real opinion about father. That there must be something radically wrong I was convinced, and I was growing quite distressed about it. Yet I did not wish to raise suspicion in his mind, or to allow him to think that I was alarmed, though it was a difficult matter to conceal my thoughts.

I resolved at last to wait no longer, but to go at once to Jenny's house and influence her to make inquiries of the doctor, or, at any rate, try to awaken her to the necessity which, somehow, she did not seem to realize.

Gussy had been as good as his word, and a splendid little pony, a docile and beautiful creature, was waiting my service whenever I was able to avail myself of him. I had already been two or three rides with my father; not far distant or fast, to be sure, for he did not seem to be able to bear it. One delightful gallop I had with Gussy, and felt all the better for it. But this afternoon I made up my mind to go alone and hear all that the doctor could tell me. Gussy had driven my father a few miles out upon some particular business which needed them both; and having ordered my pony to be taken to the end of the avenue, I leisurely walked under its pleasant shade to the large gates, where our young groom, as
I called him, a youth of seventeen, stood giving some last inspection to the buckles of the saddle.

It was a lovely afternoon. The sun, to be sure, was hot, but a little breeze met me as I rode along under the large trees that flanked one side of the road, throwing a pleasant shadow most of the way. The road on the other side was brown with rustling wheat nearly ready for harvest, while here and there, lying back amongst gardens and barns, were farmhouses, from the doors of which I had cheerful greetings as I went past.

I had but little spirit to respond to those greetings, for my mission lay heavy at my heart, and the nearer I came to the possibility of knowing, the greater my dread of the knowledge.

What was I dreading? For, after all, the doctor could only give his opinion, and he might be wrong. He held not the keys of life and death; no, they were under my heavenly Father's care. Had I forgotten that? Was I going to the earthly physician without seeking Him who has a balm for every wound, however terrible?

Half-way between our house and Jenny's stood that of Dr. Mortimer. I knew I was very near it, and thought it possible, barely possible, that I might see him. But with these thoughts I slackened my speed and drew my rein, and subsided almost into a walk, for though I wanted so much to hear the truth, I feared as much to know it.

Some yards from the house I came upon the doctor himself. He was just starting from home; not driving, but riding his old roan mare. He wheeled round and came up hastily to my side.
"Nothing the matter, I hope, at home, Miss Bruce?" he exclaimed, in what seemed to be rather an anxious tone. "Were you coming to my house?"

"There is nothing fresh the matter; but, doctor," I exclaimed in desperation, "we can never go on like this. My father, I am sure, is getting seriously ill, and I've come to beg you to tell me what you really think of him. I know you mean it for kindness, but don't you think it is false kindness to keep us and father in the dark?"

"My dear child, your father is not in the dark; he knows."

"Knows what, doctor? Knows that he is going to die and leave us all; is that what you mean?" and for a moment I turned so faint that the doctor sprang from his horse and came and laid hold of me, fearing, I suppose, that I should fall.

"While there is life there is hope, Miss Bessie," he exclaimed, "you know that, surely; and it will never do for you to give way."

"But what is this illness, doctor? Is it nothing that you can cure? It is better that I should know, indeed it is," I answered, struggling to keep back my tears and to speak calmly.

"Well, perhaps it is," said the doctor gravely; "though bear in mind that these internal diseases—such as your father is suffering from—often baffle the wisest and most learned of the profession. This is no new thing; your father has suffered for years slightly from the same cause. There was some aggravation of the symptoms after your brother's death—a shock to the system which affected him much—and since there have been many exciting
causes; yet I did not consider there was any reason to doubt that with ordinary care and quiet he might live for some years. A long sea voyage was, of course, out of the question."

"But what do you think now?" I asked, almost below my breath, my hand trembling so, I could scarcely grasp the reins.

"Miss Bessie, I wish you would come in and rest awhile, and let Mrs. Mortimer talk to you!" said the doctor, looking concerned at my pale face. "No, you won't?" But really you are alarming yourself unnecessarily. I confess I am not quite satisfied with the symptoms that have been developing themselves the last few weeks, though no doubt the heat has something to do with that. Still a different course of medicine may mitigate these."

"And if they should not?"

"Well, Miss Bessie, I should have expected you to tell me that your father is in the Almighty's hands. We doctors are but human after all!"

"Doctor! I deserve the reproof," I replied, bending down nearly to the saddle to hide my tears. "It is so, and I know it, and God can do all things! I see you have little hope to give; and, oh! it is all so unexpected. I cannot realize any danger."

"Nor is there, so far as I can see, any immediate danger. We may be enabled to avert this. I don't like the symptoms, that's all. Where is your father to-day, Miss Bessie?"

I told him, and he shook his head. "He had better not trouble himself with business for awhile, and avoid these long rides," he replied. "I must
For Life or for Death.

Tell him so. I will look in this evening. Meanwhile, Miss Bessie, you must keep brave and cheerful for his sake. It's a pity Mrs. Bruce is away; and yet, I don't know," he added, "maybe it is better so." And shaking my hand with a warm, friendly clasp, he remounted his horse and rode rapidly off.

I stood for a moment just where he left me, dazed, astounded at the confirmation of my own fears; though after all I had scarcely believed that things were so serious. And yet it was right that I should know, it was right that Jenny should know. How much of the truth had they told mamma, I wondered; and why had we been kept in ignorance that there was anything ailing dear father all these years, and that it was not merely weakness from which he suffered?

I must go to Jenny, that was clear; and lifting the reins, the pony galloped lightly forward. "Oh, if my sister only could help me with words of real cheer, of Christian hope!" I thought. I seemed to need so much the strengthening of these weak words of mine. Surely I was walking in darkness rather than in the light. And yet I knew, as the doctor had said, unbeliever as I had always thought him, that my father was in the hands of One who, because he was "Almighty," could best help, could never err. Yes, he was indeed in these "Almighty" hands. There was comfort in the word. Nothing was too hard, too great for Him. Why could not I trust to His doing all things well?

Why? Because my faith was weak, weaker far than a grain of mustard seed; and because I was
walking on the waves, and they were boisterous, and could see only the heaving depths beneath me. Had I looked upwards, I should have seen the Christ.

I took no interest in anything along the road on either hand for the rest of the way. The thought of my father having silently suffered from day to day so long, with no murmuring word, no complaint on his lips, struck me with strange awe. How was he bearing it all? He was so reticent. Might it not be possible that he was leaning on this Almighty arm; and not, as I had feared, carrying his cross alone? And then I recalled his quiet craving for some of the dear old hymns that had been my own beloved mother's favourites and comforts. In those days, when I was too young to think much about it, in my mother's life-time, might it not have been that he had entered into the light, and that since then worldly influence and worldly affections and cares had dimmed the light and brought the clouds between? and that now, through these clouds, the bright light might be shining again?

"Oh, if it were only so!" and my heart beat more hopefully with the thought. "It might be—it might be—why not?" and as I turned in at the large gates, that had for some reason been left open, and rode slowly down to the stables, I was not quite so despairing as when the doctor left me, and far more able quietly to discuss the subject with my sister.

It was a new house, this of Jenny's, and with all the bareness of new appointments around it. Pleasantly situated enough, with a background of hills and a creek running past the front of the house, near
which Ernest had a plantation of young orange-trees. But all was young and fresh—the very soil had a flavouring of lime about it; the garden, though it was carefully laid out, looked dry even for the season. It was abundantly planted, but the plants and trees were of too recent growth to put forth much of an appearance, for its owners had, till the last few months, been so much away that it was not surprising so little progress had been made.

"My dear child! what brings you here through all this heat?" my sister exclaimed, as, leaving the pony munching at some hay I had pulled for him, I walked back unobserved to the house, and, entering at the open door, looked about till I found Jenny busy at work in her little back sitting-room.

She pulled off my hat and made me sit down in a large rocking-chair, thrusting a palm-leaf fan into my hand, and presently brought me a glass of cool milk and a slice of cake. I took the milk but I could not eat; and at last, thrusting both fan and milk aside, I burst forth with the subject that was uppermost in my heart, and told her all that the doctor had said about our father's illness.

My sister was greatly distressed at first, and yet she had not been so entirely blind to the change that had been coming over father for some time past as I had thought her. She could not understand, she said, why we—Gussy, herself, and I—should have been kept in the dark—we had surely a right to be told; and at first she was inclined to blame mamma. But I told her that I did not believe mamma herself knew fully the serious nature of the complaint, or I
did not think she would have gone to England in any case.

"I'm glad we know now, that is, if Dr. Mortimer proves right," Jenny said at last, after we had talked and cried together some time. "I shall often come down and help you, Bessie dear, and together we must cheer poor father up as much as we can, and keep him from doing anything that will hurt him or make him low."

"If I were only quite certain that he is a Christian!" I timidly ventured.

"A Christian? Of course he's a Christian!" said Jenny indignantly. "Why, Bessie, what do you mean? If there is a righteous living, just, honest man on the face of the earth, it's father. And has he not borne all that he must have suffered most beautifully, without one murmuring word? I'm surprised at you, child. Why in mother's time I can remember well he used to be a member of the Church of England, and always in his place, and we always had family prayers. That, to be sure, was all dropped after mother's death; but, nevertheless, if there is a Christian on the face of the earth, father is one. Don't doubt it."

I rode home with this hope in my heart, but founded on no such basis as Jenny relied on. Not, indeed, upon what he had been himself, but in what I could not help trusting he believed: his trust in the Christ, and not in his own work. Oh! I must find out whether it was so; I could never be happy till I knew.
CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE ROCK.

"Walking by faith, not by sight."—2 Cor. v. 7.

From years of experience in the Christian life, I have learnt one lesson—a lesson of dependence, not on self, but on Christ. We need something beside our own courage to tread the crest of our troublous waves. We need something beside our own strength to resist the winds of temptation that blow so continuously around us. We just need to look away from winds and waves to Christ! nowhere else, only to Jesus, and then follows the calm!

"The hardest thing in the world to do when the waves are threatening to engulf us, and we are even beginning to sink!" you say. Ah! so it is, yet then is the time of all others to stretch out the hand of faith and cry, "Lord, save!"

The trials were coming thickly around my young Christian life, but my heavenly Father knew just what was best for me, and as the thorns in the nest of the young eaglet teach it to essay an upward flight, so did the instability of all things below lead me to cling to the Rock of Ages with all the force of my young nature.

My mother's death had come suddenly upon me when I was too young to understand the extent of my loss, and the versatility and elasticity of childhood soon dissipated the violence of my childish grief; though the memory of that gentle Christian mother still lingered like sweet perfume, permeating my after
life. Those after years were to teach, by more abiding griefs, the slender tenure upon which we hold all earthly things, the only firm place for our foothold—the "Rock of Ages."

"All other ground is sinking sands!"

Dear Sidney's death had been a crushing blow to me, and for a time the clouds hung so low, and the storm raged so high that the light seemed almost gone. "All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me," was the language of my fainting heart. And so it seemed in those sad days, when I looked to the waves and not to the Christ. We had been so much to each other, Sid and I. Together we had sought for light, together we had entered into the light, and for a little space had walked into the light hand in hand, so glad, so comforted, so at rest! And then came the end, as it seemed at the time for me, till once more a rift in the cloud showed the light beyond, and taught me that Jesus still lived, and that I had to live for Him.

And now a new grief had entered into my life, the "clouds were returning after the rain." And it was hard to understand the mystery of the fresh trials. Yes, it is a difficult matter to decipher these mysteries, but are we not told that what we cannot understand now shall be made clear to us hereafter? It is blessed to be willing to wait, to leave all our hard knots for the future to untie, just as our Father pleases to unravel them. We may learn the meaning of some of our trials perhaps in this life, the life to come will reveal the rest.
Meanwhile, the happiest position is that of a trusting child, knowing nothing certainly of the why or the wherefore, but willing to be led.

And so in these new days of trial, I was able to say after a while, as Miss Procter sweetly sang,

"I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see;
Better in darkness, just to feel Thy hand
And follow Thee."

My father was getting daily worse; that was a fact patent to all; and now that the constant visits of the doctor were imperative, and one or two consultations with an Adelaide physician unavoidable and even tacitly admitted by himself, there was no further effort at concealment, and that must have been a relief to him, though he still bore all unmurmuringly.

The disease so long but insidiously working its way, had been hastened forward by many things. The shock of Sidney's death, the voyage on my account to and from Melbourne, and the consequent sea-sickness attending it so injurious, it afterwards appeared in his case, and these followed by the necessary separation from his wife and the rest of his children, and all the previous confusion and excitement had brought rapidly on the crisis which Dr. Mortimer had hoped might have been delayed some years. There is no doubt that the disease had in reality made more steady progress than his medical men could detect, this in a great measure owing to the reticence of my dear father, who cared rather to suffer in secret than to bring his trouble on those he
loved while it could be avoided. That it was a mis-
take there is not a doubt, for we were unprepared
for the trouble when it did come, and it came more
heavily upon us.

On Gussy the intelligence fell with full force. At
first he refused to believe the danger, even though he
acknowledged that his father was very weak and ill,
worse certainly than he had ever seen him; but that
there must be an end to it all, that the head of our
house would indeed be taken away, was an idea he
found it difficult to realize. In fact, he would not
entertain it, he shut his eyes determinedly to the fact.
It could not, must not be! “What were the doctors
at that they could not reach the disease?” And it
was mainly in response to his continual urging that
doctors from Adelaide were more than once brought
up for consultation, with no other result, however,
excepting a confirmation of our fears. A mitigation
of the suffering was all that could be hoped for;
alleviation, not cure, was alone in their power.

In those days Gussy’s last remnant of boyhood left
him, and though but nineteen, he became a thought-
ful man, and the stay of our household. Not that
his old joyous nature was crushed out, it was only
subdued. He still brought cheer into the house
whenever he entered it; and my father rested on
him with the fullest conviction in his ability. It was
touching to see how in this time of his weakness he
leaned on his young son’s strength, and trusted him
to do and act in all things for him; and with the
sense of this responsibility, Gussy grew both stronger
and older.
Jenny was almost always at hand, taking the superintendence of the household chiefly on her shoulders once more, making delicate dishes to tempt father's waning appetite, and leaving me to do all the nursing and waiting upon him with old Mary's help.

We had our letters from England at last. Father was too ill to read them when they first arrived, and then only at intervals, a little at a time. Gay, bright letters they were from mamma; full of details of all kinds of pleasant reunions with her family and scenes of excitement, of the favourable termination of the money transactions, which she found handsomely provided for the children as well as for herself. "She scarcely thought that they could be back at the end of the twelve months," she wrote, "there was so much to do and to see. But, after all," she added, "it will not be long; be patient, my dear James, the time will soon fly."

"It will matter little now," I heard my dear father murmur, as with trembling hand he closed the letter; and from that time forth, I think, he laid down his trouble about it.

Once more the little sitting-room—the little room so sacred to memories of dear Sidney—was in requisition. I had made it as cosy as I could for our dear invalid. I had drawn holland covers over all the bright chairs and couch and stools; had put away the handsome table-cover, substituting one that would do service and still look pretty. The large chair, new as it was, was certainly more luxurious than the old; and on a little stand by father's side—a clever contrivance for elevating a book without wearying
the reader—lay the large Bible that had been carried to the study, but which was no longer needed there, for poor father had yielded to the power of the disease, and no longer struggled against it.

All this time very little had passed between us on the subject I had so much at heart, and yet I was growing more and more hopeful every day that he was "in the light." That old Bible was his constant study, ready to turn up at any moment when freedom from pain permitted, and in the gloaming I still sang for him, though without the aid of the piano. "He liked it better," he said, one evening when we were alone; "he could hear the words more distinctly, and my voice seemed sweeter—more like my mother's."

"You are growing very like your mother, Bessie, my child," he said quietly; "you often make me think of her—and you have her faith, too."

"Oh, father dear! and have not you?" I was kneeling at his feet on the hearth-rug and looked up at him, my eyes wet with tears.

"Her faith? No, my child. She lived in the light; so near Christ that heaven seemed always near, especially at the last. My faith is feeble indeed. But do not trouble, Bessie, my child; your 'little light,' as you call it, has guided your old father back from the darkness of a bitter unbelief. Your voice has restored the old life—God bless you, my little girl!—that now I can say,—

'Other refuge have I none—
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!'

On the Rock! on the Rock! that is the only refuge and there I am clinging."
He got up and walked feebly from the room, leaving me dissolved in tears of joy and thankfulness. At last the barrier of reserve had broken down, never to be re-erected. All was right—out of the darkness of unbelief into the clear light of the cross, with feet upon the rock and eyes directed upwards. Oh! it would all be right—it must be right, and the peace that passeth understanding must follow.

It did follow, but days of acute suffering came with it. It was not by many words that we knew of the anguish which often the sedative draughts of the doctor’s prescribing were powerless to subdue. The suffering revealed itself by the pallid cheek, the quivering lip; but the peace was there, too—on the brow, and in the eye—and I was privileged to know and to rejoice in it.

"It is all right, Bessie, my child," he would sometimes say after a paroxysm of pain, "not a stroke too much."

"And the strokes are in love, dear father!" I answered, my eyes filling with tears, as I wiped away the dew that anguish had sent to his brow.

"Yes! love unutterable! I shall understand it soon, the heights and the depths of that love that passeth understanding here."

"Oh, Mary!" I whispered, after one of these terrible paroxysms of pain—when the kind old creature was my only assistant—pain which we could do so little to alleviate, and which would have its way till, overpowered by the sedative, it was succeeded by a restless sleep. "Oh, Mary, how good it is to know that dear father is resting on the Rock, that these
billows of suffering only make him cling more closely to it!"

"Ah, Miss Bessie, I always knew old master better than you," she answered, her honest face bright with joy. "I knew him in the old days when dear missus was alive, and I always did look for him to come in to the good way again, though for a time it did seem as if he had turned his back upon it. Poor dear! may the blessed Lord give him ease."

The letters that went back to England were full of gloomy forebodings of the approaching end. My father's days were numbered, that we too truly saw, and we dared not withhold the tidings. He sent loving messages to the children, and wrote a letter with his weak, trembling hand to his wife, but it was with great effort, and at long intervals. It was finished at last, and carried off for posting, and then he lay back in his chair, with clasped hands and a look of resignation and rest on his face.

"Bessie," he said, in a low, calm voice, "it seems as if I am leaving the breakers behind; the sea is smooth ahead, and I can see land."

"The land of 'Beulah,' dear father, where the air is full of sweet sounds from the celestial city?"

"Yes," he answered wearily; "I have nearly done with earth now. You will not have your father long, Bessie, my little girl, my patient, loving little girl, but God will care for you all."

That evening, as Gussy stood at the window, gloomily looking out at the star-spangled sky as it glimmered through the leaves of the gladiolus, he suddenly turned round, saying, "What do you think,
Bessie, will those letters bring the mater back, or not?"

"Not," I replied. "I think she will wait for further intelligence. After that reaches her I do not know what she will do; but if dear father dies, I do not think she will return to Australia; all her own relatives are in England, you know."

"I shall not fret," said Gussy, with a slight accent of contempt. "But, do you think father is so much worse? He does not seem so to me," he added in a grave tone.

"Ah, but you have not seen how he suffers, or now exhausted he is after the suffering," I answered, the quick tears coming to my eyes. "But," I continued, glad to be able to say it, "like dear Sidney, he is at peace, resting on Christ. Can't you do that, dear Gussy? Don't these troubles bring you any nearer to Him?"

"How should they?" said Gussy, turning away. "Did you never hear of head-winds? That's what the trouble seems to me. It's hard, very hard on a fellow, and I can't see the right or the good of it. Father is not so old but he might have lived years yet."

"But what if it is best, if it is happier for him that he should go?"

"It's bad for us, at any rate, Bess. Can't you see it? Why, I am not even of age!"

"Dear Gussy! if you only had Christ for a friend, all would then be well."

"You have that friend; is it well with you? Are not these days of pain and suffering that you see..."
poor father endure just as agonizing to you? I see they are."

"Yes, it is well, Gussy; for, underlying all this suffering is the sure knowledge that Jesus is near, that He loves too much to hurt His own child. You believe this, do you not?"

"Oh! I'm a poor fellow without belief," he answered; and throwing down the paper he had been reading when I entered, he left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

"I COME."

"At evening time it shall be light."—ZECH. xiv. 7.

The days went wearily on—the hot, trying days of summer—and it was sometimes a very difficult thing to cool the atmosphere, or make it at all bearable to the dear, patient sufferer. Two or three times a day Gussy brought the hose round to the front of the house, and played upon the roof, and the walls, and all round, close underneath the bedroom windows, for father no longer left his room and was unable to sit up. He lay, most of the day, upon a large soft spring couch by the side of the window, where, when the sun came round, it filtered through large green leaves, and left a cool, refreshing light behind it; the wind, too, when it blew from the west, brought all its fresh, sweet breath into the room, stirring the curtains and playing among the leaves, and giving the best of its reviving breezes to the sick-room. All day long the windows were open, and all night
too, excepting when the hot wind forced us to close every avenue and exist on the air within as we could.

It was a difficult thing to get ice, so far up the country as we were; but we contrived to do it, and, with our refrigerator, cooling drinks and cool fruit, so necessary in my father's case, even became possible, our large cellar making it easier to accomplish.

But all was of no avail for permanent good; to deaden the suffering, to cool the parched mouth, to bring the sleep that was so tardy in closing the weary eyes, this was all that we could do—Jenny, Gussy, and I—and we bent all our energies to do it.

Still, while the suffering body was fast failing, the mind was instinct with life, clear and definite, not of earth, but of heaven. There no longer existed a doubt of dear father's entrance into the light, its radiance fell on the calm brow, and shone from the soft eyes, while from the pale lips, so long sealed and silent, came words of happiness and cheer to comfort us, his children.

There was no exuberant joy, only the calm, quiet peace in believing, in the knowledge of sins forgiven and of a loving Saviour's continued presence, the firm rest of faith, the gladness of feeling the feet upon the Rock after the long, dreary battle with the waves of unbelief. "I know," that was the language of his eyes, "I know that my Redeemer liveth. I know that He is with me, and in this valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil."

Gussy was at last beginning to see how near the end was approaching, but he bitterly rebelled and fought against the knowledge with all his strength of
will. "Why should it be?" he continually asked. "Why should not father live to his three-score-and-ten, like other men? Where was the potency of medicine, if it failed to touch internal diseases?" He railed against the doctors, and would not believe that it was the will of God that the beloved father should be taken from his children. He would listen to no words of love, or comfort, or chiding. "It was wrong," he insisted, "in every way wrong, a bitter wrong!"

Father saw it at last; it was scarcely wonderful that he did, for my poor brother found it hard to repress his feelings even in his presence. He saw that his young son's warm heart was wrung with bitter feelings at the sorrow that was coming upon him, perhaps the better understanding those feelings from his own past experience; and so, one evening, when Gussy came in to see how he was, he put his thin, wasted fingers upon the young, manly hand that rested on the coverlet, and gently said,—

"It is all right, my boy, as God's ways always are. You will see it so some day."

"How can I, father? how can I?" Gussy replied, struggling with himself to repress his emotion. "It does not seem right to see you suffering so; it cannot be right that you should be taken from us like this!"

"Nay," my father quietly responded; "the wonder is that I have been spared so long, that, like the barren fig-tree as I have hitherto proved, another year, one more year, has been given to me; that He has brought me back with His own loving hand out of the dark-
ness and into the light. Yes! and for all this I shall have to praise Him to all eternity! Gussy, my son, I want you to learn this song of praise, too!” he faintly added. “He doeth all things well!”

Gussy stole away from the bedside with averted face, for father was soon exhausted, and he did not wish to distress him by allowing him to see either his grief or his inability to share his faith.

Gussy, Jenny, old Mary, and I had alone access to the sick-room, with the exception of Ernest, and the clergyman who came now and then, but had little to say, and seemed stiff and awkward in the saying of that little, and could not comprehend the entire rest and peace of the dear sufferer in the very midst of his sufferings. The doctor, of course, was in and out as frequently in the day as possible. Not that he could do anything more; he frankly told us he could not, but there was a certain strength and cheer even in his presence, and while he continued to come, even though it was only in the character of a friend, it did not seem quite such a hopeless abandonment of things. The neighbours far and wide came and went, full of sympathy and kindly interest and inquiry, but submitting to the doctor’s dictum, that his patient must be left in the most perfect quiet; and so those last precious hours were passed only with his elder children around him.

As to mamma and the other children, after those final messages he never spoke of them again; I think he had left them with God. Earth and earthly sorrows, and cares, and affections seemed growing dim in the light of eternity, and as the days wore away,
this became even more manifest. His words were few and faltering, but they were all of Christ. The darkness was all gone; he was indeed realizing the truth of the promise, "At eventide it shall be light."

I still sang for him. Dear father! he loved the old, old songs of "Jesus and His love." Softly and low I sang, for my voice was hushed in the sick-room now, just modulated to the degree that the overstrung nerves could bear. Often when I watched by him in the night he would ask for one of his old favourites. The words rested him; the music soothed him; and sometimes he craved for a song when others held the watch, and he did not recognize the watchers, and they had to fetch me from my bed to sing. I have often wondered since how I could have done it, the tears blinding my eyes, and my voice quivering with emotion as it did; but I was strangely helped in those days, and I seemed to feel the touch of my Heavenly Father's hand, guiding me through all these trying scenes, and giving me strength to bear up, even though He was taking my dear earthly father from me.

"Light at eventide;" yes, up to the very last, the valley was lighted all the way, and the end came when we were least expecting it. Just the quiet calm, just the solid rest, just the entire confidence of one who feels his foothold on the Rock, and heeds not the winds that blow or the waves that beat.

It was one evening, the evening after a hot day. We had all the windows open and the curtains drawn back, to allow the soft, sweet breeze that came with
the setting sun to have free entrance. Father lay in his bed; he had not been able to bear the transit to his couch that day; but the drapery was all looped away, and the slight wind gently rustled the fringe of the canopy and the leaves of the Bible that lay upon the coverlet. During the heat of the morning father had been restless, but the pain had ceased; there had been no fresh paroxysm for many hours, and we knew by the doctor's countenance that this must be a symptom of the approaching end.

"He will suffer no more," he said, pressing my hand as he passed from the room; and so indeed it proved, for as the evening drew on he slept at intervals, lying calmly among his pillows, slept as he had not done without opiates for weeks before.

Gussy and I had taken up our places on either side the bed—our places by right. Just at sundown Jenny and her husband came in. The doctor had met and warned them of what they might expect. And silently they entered the large room, now cool with the fresh west breezes, and lighted by the rosy rays of the declining sunbeams. They placed themselves at the foot of the bed. How I wished they would not do so. It looked like what I could not yet bear to think of, that father was indeed leaving us. Jenny was quietly crying, her head on her husband's shoulder. Gussy had buried his face in one of his hands as they entered, as though he would not read the confirmation of his fears in their eyes. The other hand was in his father's clasp. As for me, all the tears were dried from my eyes, and in the hush of that room I seemed at last almost to see the golden gates
of the celestial city, and to hear the rustle of the angels' wings.

Father presently opened his eyes and smiled upon us all. "Bessie, my little girl," he whispered, "sing 'Just as I am.'"

How could I sing? My heart almost failed me, but it was not a time to choose. I softly sang through the first verse.

As I came to the refrain, "Oh, Lamb of God, I come," he raised himself on his pillow, lifting his thin hands, his dear eyes turned heavenward, as he distinctly murmured the words "I come!" Then he fell gently back, the hands lay motionless on the coverlet; the eyes were still turned heavenward, but all earthly vision had passed from them for ever.

"Light at eventide;" yes, the light lingered on the dear face, with its silver hair. Every ripple of trouble seemed flown, and when they closed his eyes, he seemed not dead but only in a peaceful slumber. Only the loving smile that rose to the lips with those words "I come!" still rested there and gave expression to that last glad surrender.

"I come!" Yes, he had done with earth and earthly care and earthly suffering, and had gone to his rest with only the plea of a Saviour's shed blood, with no doubt of his acceptance. Why indeed should he doubt? or why should we that he had entered into the joy of his Lord?

I stood at the bedside in a maze, one of the thin hands still in mine. I could not weep. I did not faint. I was only dazed and very weary; and presently Jenny led me away to my own room and helped
me to bed. And then I slept, slept as the disciples did, with sorrow, all through the night, a deep, heavy sleep. The sun was high in the heavens when I awoke, and at first I was startled, alarmed at the light that flooded the room. Slowly came the consciousness back to me of what that long, undisturbed sleep meant. The watch was over; the prisoner was free.

CHAPTER X.

"By His light I have walked through darkness."—Job xxix. 3.

"I do not quite understand you, Bessie. When Sidney died you gave way so utterly that everybody thought that you would not get over it, and that we should lose you next; and since father's death you have just taken the burden of the household upon you, have arranged everything, and managed everything, and consoled everybody, just as if you had not need of being cared for and comforted as much as anybody yourself. No, I confess I do not understand it;" and Gussy pushed forward his empty coffee-cup to be refilled, with a degree of impatience in the action that showed the state of his feelings with regard to the subject on hand.

We were seated at breakfast together in the large dining-room, Gussy and I, some weeks after father's death. The summer had passed; the vines were changing colour; and the grapes—those that had been left ungathered—were hanging in disconsolate-looking bunches, over-ripe, and drying or shrinking
on their stalks. Only late autumn flowers were blooming in the garden, chrysanthemums, and Michaelmas daisies, and monthly roses; while the violets were again peeping out among their thick leaves, breathing out their perfume in the early morning or in the dewy evening.

Those early mornings were beginning to get chilly, and though the window nearest the table was open, admitting the sunshine and the perfume of the violets together, there was a bright little fire glowing on the hearth, where the hot breakfast cakes were keeping each other warm. We were young and did not care much for the heat of the fire, but it made the room look brighter than it would have done that chill morning without it, and when I came in alone to wait for Gussy it certainly greeted me almost like the face of a friend.

I deliberately poured out the coffee for my brother, carefully meting out the sugar and cream, thinking all the time over what he had said, but making no reply till I handed him back his cup. Then I slowly answered,—

"I hardly know whether I can make you understand the difference, Gussy."

"At any rate you might try," he responded dryly.

"Well then," I replied, playing with the spoon in my cup and speaking in low, deliberate tones, "there is just this difference, the walking in darkness without and with the light. Don't you know yourself the literal difference? Is not a road two different things in the light of day and the darkness of night, the darkness without even the glimmer of a star?"
"Well, of course, that's easy enough to see, but then—"

"Then the road is all the more difficult to follow in the dark if it is a new and untried one." I went on without heeding his interruption. "There are dangers, real and imagined; sounds that may exist, or that our own quickened senses create for us; voices in the air that may be anything else than friendly; and pitfalls for our feet, that every deep shadow conjures up, whether real or not."

"What has all this to do with the subject, Bessie? Come, I shall think you are begging the question," said Gussy impatiently. "I know very well what it is to travel a road I have never set foot on before, and in the dark too, as well as you can tell me. That is not what I want to know."

"Is it not? and yet after all it amounts to the same thing. When dear Sidney died, it came so suddenly upon me, and the trouble, the distress, the anguish rose up like thick clouds, and just shut out the light of the cross. The cross itself loomed out of the darkness, but the light was shrouded. That's how it was I gave way, and no wonder."

"Can't you speak plainly for once, Bessie? I'm an ignorant fellow, remember, and seeking for information. I understand what you mean by the cross well enough, but the light of the cross and the shrouding; there you speak in mystery."

"You don't like my metaphors, scripture metaphors too," I replied, smiling gravely. "It's simple enough, I was in dreadful trouble then, and so carried away by it that I just forgot that Jesus by His death on the
cross had not only procured life for us, thus throwing a light over the whole transaction, but that He still lived, and that because He lives His children must live also. I was so taken up, so engrossed with the darkness of the sorrow that had come upon me that I forgot the light that Christ Himself brought to us, to dear Sid, and to me, when He lighted our darkness, by showing Himself to us as our God, forgiving our sins, and bestowing His love upon us. I felt the violence of the blow that took my brother away, and forgot that it was a tender, loving hand that did it. I was verily walking in darkness on this untried road."

"I don't well see how it could have been otherwise," said Gussy moodily.

"It ought to have been. Had I been walking nearer to Jesus, the light of His countenance, of His presence, that very nearness would have helped me, as it did at last," I answered, the tears in my eyes. "God's word has plenty of directions for these times of sorrow and darkness, Gussy. 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?' This was my situation when Sidney died, but I forgot the injunction that followed, 'let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God'—His name Jesus—'He shall save His people from their sins,'—His name—'Wonderful! Counsellor! the Mighty God!' Oh, how could I forget it?"

"Well," said Gussy, rising and leaning on the back of his chair, "I'm pretty obtuse, but I believe I see a little what you mean, that is sufficient to account
for what I confess I did think rather strange at the time, that you should give way so much if you fully believe what you professed. But I have been more than ever puzzled since father died, because I know very well how you really loved him and felt his death."

"This is the solution to it all," I answered, also rising, "'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' It is this simple trust that does it. Without Him 'I can do nothing.' Oh Gussy, it is good to be able to stay ourselves on God; I wish you would try it. It is good to have Him to walk with in the darkness.

"'I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than walk alone in the light.'"

He made no reply, but pushing back his chair, walked hastily across the room. But I saw the back of his hand dashed across his eyes as he passed into the hall; and I could not help hoping more than I ever hoped before that my young brother was seeing already the use and the truth and the beauty of having such a Friend, even though he could not yet claim Him as his.

And it was, as he said, not that I felt father's death less, but that I felt God's nearness more. The very darkness and night of sorrow "was light about me," because I walked not alone in it, but with Him. I cannot tell the quiet calm of those days, how He strengthened me and helped me, and how I felt I could take from His hand all that He sent me with the unquestioning trust of a little child. Yes, the very
darkness was bright with His presence, and, thank God, I am not alone in this experience; ‘such joy have all His saints.’”

There was a great revolution in some respects in our household matters; in other respects all went on smoothly as before. Father’s will was explicit enough; and as if he had imagined what would be his wife’s course of action when she heard of his death, all her share was left in specie, because readily transferable; each child’s portion being so adjusted that they could receive it only on coming of age. Jenny’s share had already been received as a marriage portion; this was thoroughly understood. The house and lands fell to Gussy and myself. Sidney had already dowered us, so that we were amply provided for, and there was nothing to do but to go on quietly as before.

Mamma’s decision was quickly made, as we knew it would be. She had no desire, not a single wish to return to Australia, now that father was dead. There was nothing to come for; it had no attractions for her, and England had everything attractive. I wonder whether it was a kind of prevision that induced her to insist on taking all the children with her? As it was, it was better so; they were all together and with friends.

The old home was not, however, the same; there was a strange stillness and quiet about it, now so many of the loved ones were gone. I missed the presence of the children greatly, and sometimes, when Gussy was away, and I sat through the long winter evening alone, sewing, or reading, or writing, I wished that I could have had Maudie for a companion, warm-
hearted, impetuous, yet thoughtful Maudie. I felt strangely weary without her, and wondered if she would forget me, or whether, in the round of study, and afterwards of society into which her mother I knew would be anxious to introduce her, she would ever think of "sister Bessie" and write to far-off Australia.

There had been other changes going forward in our neighbourhood. The little chapel that lay away among the trees about a mile and a half along the road from our house had lately become too small for its congregation, while the attendance at the church had gradually dwindled away to insignificance. I had heard that it was intended either to enlarge, or to build a new chapel immediately, and one day when I rode by on my little pony, to pay a visit to a poor family who needed a little help, I found that there were a busy group of workmen, most of whom I recognized as members of the chapel, carting stone and building materials, and that the new building was really in course of erection—being, in fact, a foot above the foundations. It was in front of the old one, which was to be given over to Sabbath-school purposes.

I was glad of this, for I should be more certain of Gussy's attendance with me on the Sunday. As it was, he generally accompanied me in the evening, "because," as he said, "the house was so dreary in my absence; not because the meagre, close, overcrowded little chapel, with its very occasional supply of ministers worthy of the name, was any attraction to him." Before the winter was out the church doors were closed altogether and the clergyman had sailed.
for England; so it was the little chapel or none for us, and I had determined for my part, as God had placed me over a household, that I, at least, would set the example of keeping holy day.

I stood looking at the busy group of men, all so thoroughly earnest and happy in their self-imposed work, each with his contribution of stone or timber. It made me think of the raising of the temple of old, and of the gold, and the cedar, and precious stones, the ivory, and carved work, and rich hangings of the loom—all the glad offerings of a people in thorough earnest to erect a place where God might be worshipped.

And what was I doing towards the work? Quietly looking on, glad to see the energy and life that was manifest everywhere. But that should not be all; I resolved that my little should not be wanting when called for.

As I thought this a gentleman I had not seen suddenly emerged from behind a tree, where he had been discussing some matter respecting the building with the architect, and came across to where I stood, raising his hat as he did so, and shook hands warmly with me. It was one of the principal ministers on whose services we were dependent every Sunday.

"I did not know you had proceeded so far as this, Mr. Stoneham," I said, after exchanging the customary civilities; "I expected there would be more preliminary meetings."

"Well, it is usually so, Miss Bruce, I know," he answered brightly; "but the fact is, the brethren recognized the immediate necessity of enlargement,
and this being a comparatively slack season of the year, they each offered, not only their contributions of stone and wood, but also their labour, and so, as there was nothing like 'striking the iron while it is hot,' we closed at once with the offer. We shall wait upon our other friends for their contributions presently," he added, laughing.

"I shall be glad to assist with mine, Mr. Stoneham, for I also recognize the necessity of a new chapel—we have been most unpleasantly crowded of late."

"Thanks, thanks, Miss Bruce! and as there is nothing like 'striking the iron,' &c., as I observed just now," he continued, with a smile, "we have been thinking that when our new chapel is up we shall have to get a harmonium, and that will necessitate an organist. Is it asking too much for your services in this matter?" 

"Not if you have no one who can better occupy the position," I replied. "I never have played in public, but I dare say I can overcome my dislike to that, if I can be of use."

"Oh, thank you, thank you; that will be a great difficulty overcome!" he exclaimed gladly. "May I mention this to the people? It will be an additional spur for their energy."

"Certainly!" I answered, "you are quite at liberty to do so. And you can also say, Mr. Stoneham, if you have no objection, that my contribution shall be a new harmonium," I continued, with a bow and a smile, as I turned my pony's head and galloped off without allowing him time to express his pleased surprise or utter more thanks.

So that was to be my contribution to the building.
of this temple, where no fine ivory, or gold, or frankincense, or myrrh were pouring in as freewill offerings, but where the gifts were as free, and as earnest, and as glad, and all tending to the one object—the worship of God.

I had money enough; the harmonium would cost me little self-denial. Not so the position of organist. But as I stood there I had quietly counted the cost, and remembering in Whose praise I was to yield my services, I put on one side my reluctance, glad to do even this little for Him.

"As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there. All my springs are in Thee."

So sang David; and so sang I as I went forward on the visit to my poor friends, all the better fitted for this visit by my resolve.

CHAPTER XI.

FOUND WANTING.

"Whoso walketh wisely shall be delivered."—Prov. xxviii. 26.

We had a very quiet winter, and when Gussy was away I was of necessity very much alone. Occasional calls, of course, we had; but we were in general left to ourselves, and might have drifted into an unsocial spirit, which, once attained, is so hard to overcome. But on the return of spring, with its brightness and its flowers, everything was altered. Gussy began again to bring home friends, and I was roused out of the apathy into which I was unconsciously falling, and was compelled to do my best to entertain them and please my brother.
It was certainly good for me as well as for him that we should have more society; it was unnatural—the state of quiet into which we had fallen. During the many evenings I had passed alone that winter it was not very surprising that thoughts of the past—of dear Sidney, and of dear father—should come crowding on my quiet moments, often bringing the tears with them. I knew that with them all was right, but I was none the less lonely, and I missed them more every day, instead of less. Old Mary often looked askance at me, and suggested respectfully how much more lightsome it would be if we only invited more friends. Perhaps Gussy took the hint, or feeling the same need himself, resolved to put an end to our solitude.

Among the friends he invited, however, came Frank Miller. He had been absent some time in a neighbouring colony, where his father had taken up a large run, and had only quite recently returned home. I had not heard of his return, and one evening was therefore very sorry to see him come in with Gussy, though they were not alone, being accompanied by Harry Lorimer, the son of a wealthy stock-owner in the neighbourhood. I also had a young lady friend staying with me, Lottie Pevensy, the daughter of a solicitor residing in the nearest township, a merry lively girl of eighteen, an active worker in the church which her father attended. She was not a member, nor indeed, had she made any definite profession, but her bright face was turned Zionward, and her interests and activities were all tending that way.

Lottie was a pleasant companion for myself; but
I asked her chiefly because it made home brighter for Gussy, and I was not long in discovering that the dark eyes and rich brown hair of Lottie, as well as her lively, piquant manners, were very attractive to him, while he was by no means unattractive to her. But Frank Miller—I had not even thought of him for a long while, had no idea, indeed, that he intended to return. I fully believed that by my manner I had sufficiently repulsed him, and that he would trouble me no further. I was, therefore, greatly disappointed to find that it was not so, that he was not so readily repulsed; that, on the contrary, he was disposed to take things more than ever for granted. I was determined that this should not continue, though, unless he spoke definitely, it would be almost impossible for me to do anything more than I had already done.

I noticed, however, a change that evening, and I thought that there were symptoms of a determination to bring the matter to a conclusion by some means or other, and that he was only abiding his time.

I had occasion after tea to leave the room to give orders to the servants respecting the supper, and also a room for young Lorimer, who had arranged to sleep at our house that night, as he and Gussy intended to start for a distant station in the morning.

I had given my orders, and was returning to the parlour, where Lottie was playing and singing and contributing to the pleasure of the gentlemen, when Frank met me at the door of the little sitting-room, and asked me to grant him a moment’s interview.

So it was coming out at last. The time was ill-
chosen, of course. It would not have been like Frank's usual way of action had it not been so. But there was nothing left me but to grant him the interview he asked, to be true and honest to myself and to him, and to have it all over as soon as possible.

I entered the little room. It was lighted by a single lamp; the dim light was perhaps all the more agreeable. He placed a chair for me, but I remained standing near the table, and he could do nothing less than stand too. It was a tacit way of declaring that I did not wish the interview prolonged.

"I'm sorry to seem abrupt, or to keep you away from your friends, Miss Bessie," he said, after a moment's rather awkward pause, "but I think, with your permission, it would be well that we came to a definite understanding; we cannot well go on like this."

"Pardon me, Mr. Miller," I responded, rather indignantly, "I do not comprehend you. However, this will define the position exactly: I receive you as Gussy's friend, and have always been glad to do him that pleasure."

"Something more than that after all this time, I fancy, Miss Bessie," he replied, knitting his eyebrows. "You do not surely mean to tell me that it is simply as Gussy's friend you receive me?"

"Certainly I do; I have never knowingly given you reason to think anything else, Mr. Miller. I can scarcely believe that you have."

"I have been deceived, then, that's all; for I did think that you cared for me, and that you must have known that it was not as Gussy's friend I came here
day after day a few months ago. You surely must
have guessed that it was for you, and for you only,
that I cared."

"If I had such a suspicion, Mr. Miller, I did my
best to show you that those visits were very dis­
agreeable to me. I never encouraged them; it was
all I could do," I returned, sorry for his discomfort,
and yet annoyed that any little attention I may have
shown him for my brother's sake should have been
so misconstrued.

"Why should the thought of my love be so
displeasing?" he presently asked. "It's true and
genuine. If I haven't much refinement, I'm true to
the backbone in my love to you, Bessie."

"I am sorry if it is so," I answered low, but firmly,
"for there is one great line of demarcation between
us, Mr. Miller; you have forgotten that. The faith
I love you esteem foolishness, all that I think most
precious and sacred you regard with ridicule; we
serve two different masters. Do you not see how
entirely unsuitable we are to each other?"

"Whatever my thoughts, I should never interfere
with your belief; you might have everything your
own way," he broke in impetuously.

"I require something more than that in one I
would esteem or love," I answered. "He must de­
light in the same things; there can be no happiness
where the paths are divided or diverse. Unequal
yoking is forbidden in God's Word, and can only
bring misery."

"Then it is only the question of religion that
stands between us?"
"Not the only question, but an insurmountable one. Mr. Miller, we are in every way very unsuited; you could never be happy with me."

"I am willing to run the risk."

"I am not. Please to consider the answer final. I can give you no other; but I do wish you well, and am sorry unwittingly to give you pain."

He turned abruptly and looked at me.

"Miss Bessie," he said, "don't you think it possible that you might win me over to what you wish? Am I so hopeless a case?"

"Certainly not hopeless. God's mercy is all-sufficient," I answered sorrowfully; "but it must be His love that wins you, and not mine, Mr. Miller. I should indeed be glad to hear such news as that."

"In that case would you listen to me?" he asked with sudden eagerness.

"No, I could not do that."

"Then that dream's up!" he exclaimed passionately; and seizing his hat, and without another word, he left the room and the house.

The trial was over, and very painful it had been, a great trial to me. I went into my own room, and throwing myself on the floor, beside the large armchair, buried my face among the cushions. I felt sorry for Frank Miller, sorry for his disappointment, even though I felt he had had so little encouragement, so little right to expect. I was sorry, too, for him as an old friend and neighbour, that he still held to the unbelief and scepticism that could only terminate in misery if it continued. And yet I was glad for my own release from attentions that were..."
very much opposed to my wishes. I was glad for Gussy's sake, that he would be rid of a friend holding such questionable principles. I gave thanks for the deliverance, not only for myself but for him.

I got up presently, quieted and relieved, and just at that moment Lottie came to my door, to see what had become of me.

"The gentlemen are out at the stables, looking at Mr. Miller's horse. There is something wrong with it or with him, I believe," she said, looking earnestly in my face. But if she thought I had any revelations to make, she was mistaken; and finding I was uncommunicative, she soon turned to another subject.

The next thing I heard of Frank Miller was that he had gone back to Victoria, and this time to settle there.

"I suppose you've sent him off, Bessie," said Gussy, who was my informant. "Well, you have certainly acted wisely. I would not, as I said before, have had you marry a man of his stamp for anything; but I shall miss him nevertheless."

He laughed, but received no answer, and presently went on with something else.

There could indeed be no question that I had done wisely in dismissing Frank Miller. In no case could I have accepted him. The question was, could I have done it more kindly, have spoken more decidedly of the things in which I had found him "wanting," of the terrible nature of the unbelief he held, and of the only source of real happiness? There is so much occurs to us in afterthought which we might have said and have not.
I lay awake that night thinking how I myself might have been found wanting in kindness, in gentleness, in courage; and yet thankful for the assurance that I might bring all my failures, all my cowardice, to my Saviour's feet, and find pardon, and that my lack of faithfulness could not hinder His work.

"Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." I bowed both head and heart together as I saw how again and again I had failed to fulfil the injunction; how, even in the daily quiet path that at present I had to tread, there were numberless pitfalls for my feet. The apostle's injunction, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," was as much needed for me as for those old-time Christians, and the same grace to uphold, the same strength to support, the same wisdom to direct was ready for me as for them.

These little clouds, so apparently insignificant as they seem, how they come between us and the light! Little household difficulties, little family differences, little jars and discomforts, trivial enough perchance in themselves, but bringing the shadow with them. Ah, how much we are the subjects of them in everyday life! In proportion as we walk in the light, in the light of a near Christ, so shall these shadows flee away. Alas! for the shadows that will come while we are surrounded by the mists of earth. By-and-by we shall rise above the mists, and then "our sun shall no more go down."

There were days of quiet after that, days in which Gussy was away, and I had much time on my hands.
In the midst of these Jenny’s first baby was born, a sweet, bonny little girl, and so like dear father that I believe I loved it all the more for the likeness. I often rode over to see my sister and her baby, proud of my new title of aunt, and delighting in the soft, rosy little cherub who had come to send a thrill of gladness into all our hearts. I think Jenny herself appeared invested with new grace by her maternity. Much that was brusque had given way to a gentle softness. That babe was the poetry of the life to her that had hitherto been so practical. It was in taking up her new responsibilities too that she first began to discern a need for other and higher wisdom than her own, she first discovered her own weakness and her desire for Almighty strength. At the time this was only discernible to the watchful eye of love, for Jenny was not one to parade her feelings; on the contrary, she erred on the other side, cloaking rather than revealing. But in after-days she spoke of that time as the faint dawn of the hope in which years after she died rejoicing.

CHAPTER XII.

TIME’S VAGARIES.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”—Eccles. iii. 1.

The grass had grown green on dear Sidney’s grave; even father’s was covered with a thick carpet of turf and flowers. The iron railings that enclosed them had been repainted, after rough winter rains and
summer heat had passed over them; for three years had gone by since the stone was raised with its simple urn in the little country churchyard near our home, and many flowers had blossomed and faded, and bloomed again over the precious dust.

After all, it was only the dust of the casket; the jewels had long been in safe keeping. "His jewels," to be "counted up at the last day."

Three years! Time had passed so rapidly that it was a mere roll of days to look back upon, and yet every day had had its duties and its trials. In some respects those days had been full, for other interests had cropped up that had taken me out of myself and had made life a comparatively busy one.

Gussy and I had become greatly attached to each other. He was of a different nature from Sidney. There was not the tender nearness that existed in our sister and brotherhood—it was scarcely likely—but we, Gussy and I, were very much to each other; and I gratefully rejoiced in the influence I held over him, and I gladly laid myself out to give him pleasure and attach him to his home.

He was of a gay, rollicking temperament, full of life and health and animal spirits, running over with merriment at times. And yet there were quiet moments when a word, or a remembrance of the dead, or one of the old hymn-tunes betrayed him into a feeling which revealed that there was a craving for something more substantial than earthly pleasures, a reaching forward towards the light which gleamed through the darkness, a yearning after better things.

Of a lively, social disposition, Gussy made many
friends, and our home was no longer either quiet or dull. We frequently had visitors from Adelaide, both he and I, besides little social gatherings of neighbours—neighbours within the range of a dozen miles—and these sometimes made my housekeeping no sinecure, though with such an able assistant and cook as our Mary I managed admirably.

My path was sometimes a little difficult; so young myself, and with so many young spirits to keep in check. But then I had my Master to please, I had given myself to Him, to walk in His ways, to do His will; and though I often failed—as who among us does not?—yet I was enabled to make a stand, and to make my position known. Gussy was quite ready "to back me up," as he said, "in all that was right and good," and willing "to uphold Bessie's notions of what was right and good" against both his own inclination and that of his guests.

"She's the best of little sisters, always ready to do us a pleasure; and if she does leave the decanters empty, she gives us instead her sparkling sugar-beer, or her splendid coffee, so I can't complain, and hope that you fellows will put up with it."

I overheard this speech quite inadvertently one day, addressed to a young squatter whom my brother especially wished to honour, but who was so accustomed to what are falsely called "the pleasures of the table," that Gussy seemed to consider some apology necessary for the absence of wine or spirits.

He came, however, so often after that, that he must certainly have found new virtue in coffee and sugar-beer, for he appeared thoroughly to enjoy them.
We had a splendid little chapel now in place of the old one, for the people had thoroughly carried out their intentions, and the work was done well, and even elaborately. I believe my presentation of a harmonium—the best I could procure in Adelaide—had much to do with the embellishment. After the opening services, which were very successful, I had been gradually drawn into the very vortex of its activities, and it did me good, as active Christian work always does. We are so prone to shrink into ourselves, and narrow down our work to things immediately around us, forgetting the injunction, "This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone."

In my position as organist I had gathered round me a choice little choir of all the best voices, far and near, Gussy among the rest. It was a really happy time we spent in our practice every week—sometimes at the chapel, often at our own house, for which purpose Gussy had bought a fine chamber organ, which he himself was learning to play. On Sunday it was no unusual thing to see the pews filled to overflowing, and even some talk of enlargement was again mooting.

Lottie Pevensy was one of our sweetest singers. She was constantly in her place. I was inclined to think that Gussy's enthusiasm had something to do with this, and to wonder rather that at present nothing further had come of it, till one evening—after a rather late practice at the chapel—when he had driven her home, my brother came into the little room where I was sitting, reading by lamplight, with such a tell-tale face that I knew at once he had something to reveal.
"Well, Gussy, what is it?" I said, half laughing, and pushing my book away. "Your face is full of revelations."

"Is it?" he answered, with a vivid blush, and a rather confused laugh, as, throwing himself into the easiest chair he could find, he turned away from the light. "It is your eyes that are so penetrating, I fancy; perhaps they see more than is revealed."

"Perhaps so. However, I am quite at leisure and quite prepared for all you have to tell me?" I added archly.

"You guess it, I suppose. Well, I do not know whether any great penetration was needed for that."

"None at all, my dear Guss, the thing was as clear as the day; but I suppose matters have come to a climax, and I may look upon little Lottie as a future sister."

"You will not be sorry to do so, will you, Bessie?" he asked in subdued tones.

"Sorry? why I would rather you had Lottie than any one else I know. She is just the very thing for you—lively, bright, and good—and will make the dearest little wife possible."

He got up and gave me a hug for that. I returned his hug with interest, but presently added rather gravely,—

"How about your part, Gussy dear? Lottie is a Christian. She came into the light long ago; you know that. Are you ready to support her in it?"

"Have I ever tried to hinder you, Bessie?" he asked reproachfully.

"Never, Gussy; you have been a dear, good
brother, upholding me in everything, yet willing to see me walking in the light alone. Is it to be so with your Lottie, dear?"

"Bessie, you know I would not put a straw in Lottie's way."

"I am quite sure you would not; but do you think that is enough, either for her or for you, my brother? Don't you think you ought to go hand in hand together? for 'How can two walk together except they are agreed?"

"Lottie trusts me," said Gussy, in aggrieved tones, rising and walking to the window, and turning his back upon me.

"Trusts you for what, Gussy dear? I know that her loving little heart is fully yours, and that she sees in you only all that is true and good. She is not mistaken either; I have reason to know that. Only, dear Guss, if there are two paths, one leading to and one leading from the celestial city, to be in perfect communion and fellowship, should not husband and wife tread the same? and is there a question as to which?"

"There is no question, Bessie; but hearts are not moulded at a moment's will. Some men take time to mature thoughts and feelings, that in others are revealed and matured at once. Surely you have read of 'the light that shineth more and more to the perfect day'?"

"Yes, yes," I returned, the glad tears springing to my eyes, "'the path of the just,' a little glimmer of light at the first, but steadily and constantly increasing, till it bursts forth into the perfect day! Ah, how beautiful it is!"
“Lottie discerns the little glimmer of light,” said Gussy, in low, grave tones; “she is willing to trust, and wait for the full revelation.”

“Oh, Gussy dear! so am I,” I answered, my head drooping on his broad shoulder; “so am I, so am I! Thank God for the little glimmer—‘more and more, unto the perfect day!’ Yes, it will surely come, and we will pray and wait for it.”

And so Gussy and Lottie’s engagement was completed—an accomplished fact at last. It was the bright spring-tide again, and everything was just perfect in its beauty, as perfect as anything earthly can be. We were already in the midst of busy preparations for the approaching wedding; not indeed that there were to be any very great doings on the occasion. Lottie was, of course, to be married from her father’s house. I was appointed her chief bridesmaid, while her two young sisters and a cousin completed the number. The marriage was to take place in the house, and Mr. Stoneham was to be the officiating minister, while the relatives and near friends on both sides were to complete the number of wedding guests.

“It was not to be a showy but a pretty wedding,” Mrs. Pevensy had smilingly said; and we were quite acquiescent, and delighted that it should be so.

I had really nothing to do with the active preparations. Mrs. Pevensy was quite equal to those, only “my skilful fingers,” as they were pleased to term them, were called into requisition, and much of the delicate needlework and artistic decorations were handed over to me.

I was sitting alone one evening, about a week be-
fore the wedding day, my fingers twining in and out amidst flowers, lace, and white satin, but my thoughts away from my work and in the distant past. It was a very still evening, just before the gloaming. The sun came softly in at the window, resting its rosy light upon the table and its delicate fabrics, falling in a misty haze over the room, and scattering its crimson glory over everything. The windows were open, for the day had been warm, and the little breeze that stole in and out was very pleasant, with its perfume-laden breath.

All at once, the murmur of voices coming towards the house aroused me. I recognized one as Gussy's, but the other chimed in with those far-off memories in which I had been indulging. What was it in those tones, clear and deep, that brought the memory of Sidney and Nina Templeton to my mind? Nina had long left the colony. She and her husband were residing on an estate in Scotland, to which he was heir; and Mr. and Mrs. Templeton, sen., with their youngest son, had followed them. The old home, the old beautiful home, had been closed some years, while Kent had been for months travelling on the Continent. Those were the tidings that from time to time reached us, recalling the past. But why should that voice so suddenly bring back all these memories so freshly to me, while the hot flush on my cheek and the beating of my heart rose and fell as I listened?

I had risen to my feet, throwing aside the ribbons and laces, as the first sounds of the voices reached me; but, recovering a little of my self-possession as the voices drew nearer, I re-seated myself, and had
taken up my work again, when the door was pushed widely open, and Gussy's hearty voice exclaimed,—

"Bessie, I have brought an old friend to see you."

It was Kent Templeton who stood before me.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF ONE SPIRIT.

"He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely."—Prov. x. 9.

Kent Templeton! I had heard the voice; it had recalled the past, showing indeed that in a dim sort of way I recognized it; and yet, when my brother pushed open the door and I saw him standing before me, it was with a shock of intense surprise and repulsion—repulsion not for his own sake—for what had he ever done to injure or hurt me or mine? Had he not, on the contrary, strangely shown his stern disapproval of his sister Nina's heartlessness, and attempted by every means in his power to neutralize her coquetry? I knew all this, and yet I could not help it, and the sight of him brought back all the pain and the hurt of those past days. Nina Templeton, with her fascinations and love of power, had taken my brother from me, and how could I look kindly upon her?

It was not just; it was not Christian; it was not upright; and yet I desired of all things to "walk uprightly in all things." But these were my first impressions, and impressions so powerful that I must have betrayed them, for my lips were stiff when I attempted to speak, and for a moment I turned faint and giddy—for a moment only—till I resumed my seat;
and while Gussy, who understood something of my feelings, though he saw no reason for reciprocating or encouraging them, busily seated his guest, talking gaily to him all the while, I had a chance of recovering myself.

I had not even thought of the possibility of ever seeing Kent Templeton again. I was glad to know of the absence of the whole family from Australia and of the great improbability of their ever returning. "Glen Linn," I had only lately learnt, was sold, and this made the probability even less. But that Kent was again in the colony and had been so for the last six weeks, amidst the hurry and bustle of new interests and new ties, had never reached me.

And now he was talking quietly to my brother, smiling at his vivacious sallies, and seated very much at his ease in our little room, looking so little changed that it would have been impossible not to have recognized him. And yet there was a change, he was certainly looking older; but there was a superadded touch of refinement the travelled man nearly always acquires, and a fresh charm to the conversation which knowledge of other countries and scenes and peoples invariably brings.

Ostensibly he had some transactions with my brother, something to do with cattle. I forget what, although, with the kind intention of covering my discomfiture, he went on with the transaction in my presence, discussing the merits of various breeds and negotiating for sheep as though I had not been present. At last he turned to me with an apology for introducing his business so soon, but having heard of my brother's
approaching marriage, and knowing that unless he came immediately he should have no chance of seeing him, he had hastened the visit which otherwise would have been merely the friendly one he intended.

This it was that he told me, that after many months of travelling he had taken farewell of his father and mother, who had comfortably and permanently settled down in their new home near Worcester, and returned to Australia with a view of finally settling. "It was the land of his birth, of his education, of his sympathies," he said, "and to him it was home." He felt that he owed to her all the good he had it in his power to bestow, while the wealth he had gleaned from her fair pastures, her flocks and her herds, in the green valleys or on the sunny heights, and the little ability God had given him to use in His service belonged of right to his native land. "Glen Linn" had indeed passed into other hands, but since his return to Adelaide he had been fortunate enough to secure "The Cedars," a lovely place about ten miles distant from our house, a place which of course we had heard of, if we had not seen it. The house was very attractive to him, being built in much the same style as "Glen Linn;" and as he had secured much of his father's furniture, in addition to what he had brought from England and the Continent, he was already making a pleasant home, under the supervision of the old housekeeper who had been many years in his family, and who had accompanied his father and mother to England, but who, in extreme disgust at the cold and changeable climate of the old country, had gladly welcomed the offer to return with Kent
and undertake his household. In this home he said he should soon be ready to receive his friends.

We sat up till late, very late that night. There was so much to converse about, so much of interest to us all, especially so to me; for after a time we fell into quiet talk of dear father, and then of Sidney, of all that was lovely in their lives and peaceful in their deaths. Kent had so much to recall of his memories of those college days together. It did me good to listen as he spoke of many an act of kindness done, of many a generous yielding up of his will for the good of others, so quietly done that it was a thing to be felt, not to be talked about, of the love which most of his old companions cherished for the memory of dear old Sid. I think he dwelt upon all these little incidents principally for my sake. I know he did, for he went on to speak of circumstances occurring in later days, since the unhappy experiences of "Glen Linn,"—and upon those he never even glanced—of days of which I had heard nothing, how, while he had been struggling after the light, dear Sid had been urgently influencing others in the sacred search, seeking to win souls for the dear Saviour he was so earnestly desiring to find himself.

"A proof that he had indeed found Him long before he knew it," Kent continued impressively, his whole countenance aglow with the thought. "His eyes were 'holden,' as were those of the two mourning disciples on their way to Emmaus, and yet Jesus was 'talking with him by the way.'" He turned a wistful glance at me as he concluded. My eyes
that met his were eager and wet with fast-falling tears.

After this all feeling of repulsion vanished. I forgot his sister, and thought only of himself and his words. How could I do otherwise with one who could speak so feelingly of my brother—of the many little incidents in his past with which I was unfamiliar, and who seemed so glad to draw on his memory for my pleasure, so happy in the remembrance.

I found, too, in talking to him, that there was still the same earnest, loving faith inciting all his movements that had astonished Sidney in the old time. He was still "walking uprightly," and therefore "surely," no doubt, no uncertainty about it; his aim was to live a "higher life," to live nearer to Christ, that he might work better for Him.

We had a quiet little talk of this kind after breakfast next morning, while Gussy was absent among his men giving necessary orders. I was gently enticed into the detail of all the difficulties I found in my Christian work, in which his sympathy and advice were a strength in themselves. It was so long since I had experienced any help of this kind; for strange indeed it is that even among Christians these subjects are but rarely introduced. No wonder that we are lonely and chill in our isolated paths; for even with the light of our Father upon us, the light of Christian fellowship is good, and even a word may lead to a train of thought and consequent action which the utterer of that word may never know. It is the little spark that kindles the fire, and by a little spark of a word most frequently is
the "One Spirit" revealed. Like the sign of free-masonry, it shows we are akin.

But we had each our separate paths to go, our several duties to perform—Kent, my brother, and myself. Just now they were rather exciting and engrossing ones for us, and Kent had his distant stations to visit, which hitherto more pressing engagements had prevented his doing. So we parted, but not without his having asked and obtained permission to come again.

The next few days passed rapidly, and Gussy's wedding morning was ushered in by the beautiful bright weather we often enjoy before summer asserts its power—with sun enough to ripen the fruits, and breeze sufficient to temper the heat of the sun and bring out the perfect perfume of the flowers. Bride could never have experienced a more auspicious day.

It was a pleasant home—"The Pines," where the Pevensys resided, lying just out of the township and away from the office, and in a bowery garden with a wide lawn and flower-beds in front, particularly distinguished by a number of magnificent arum lilies. It was a long, low structure, which none but the initiated would imagine to be principally of wood, for the broad verandah that swept all round the house was covered with a well-kept drapery of closely trimmed dolycas, always green, and handsomely arched before every window and doorway, while stucco and paint had also completely concealed any suspicion of woodwork anywhere.

I liked Mr. Pevensy; he was a pleasant man and genial in his manners, notwithstanding his profession
—the law—with which profession a certain idea of shrewdness and sharp practices is associated, which do not seem quite congenial with our notions of friendliness, whatever proofs we may sometimes have to the contrary. On the morning of his daughter’s marriage he was especially agreeable with everybody. It was easy to see that it met with his entire approval, even from a mere worldly point of view, and his wife, though she was half smiles and tears, was as fully rejoicing in the occasion as himself. Gussy was in every way an excellent match for their child.

Everything was in beautiful order. We had draped the drawing-room with white flowers, among which the groups of orange blossoms here and there breathed their rich perfume. They looked lovely amidst the delicate foliage of mingled pines and acacias, which we had gathered from the adjacent scrub and garden.

All three windows—French windows they were—looking out upon the verandah were widely open, admitting the gentle breeze that rustled the lace of the curtains and playfully lifted Lottie’s bridal veil as she entered the room on her father’s arm.

A pretty little delicate bride she looked as she stood by the side of her tall, stalwart husband, her bright eyes downcast, and the customary smiles on her lips toned down by the solemnity of the vows she was about to take. To my mind Gussy had never looked so handsome. It was a “pretty wedding,” a very pretty wedding, as Mrs. Pevensy had promised it should be, and Mr. Stoneham made the ceremony as sacred and impressive as an act involving a whole life’s happiness demanded. Tears as
well as smiles, of course, were there, for what young girl, leaving home for a new life and an untried path, even with one she loves, can do so without the memory of the loved ones she is leaving throwing a little shadow over her joy; or what mother, yielding up her child to another, can do so without experiencing a little pain at the severance of the dear old ties that bound mother and child together! But the deed was soon performed, and the tears soon followed by smiles, and the wedding breakfast that succeeded the ceremony was all that it should be, quiet, lovely, and perfect in its arrangements.

Then little Lottie laid aside her lace veil and bridal robes, and simply attired in a dark travelling costume, drove off from the old home with her happy young husband, amidst a shower of rice and old slippers, the old-time precursor of happiness; amidst, also, I believe what was still better, the earnest prayers of some of us, that "of one spirit" these two might walk, and in one way, and that that way might always and only be "In the light."

Our young groom, Ned, came early in the evening with my pony, as I had ordered him. I wanted to be quiet and alone, to think and to pray; for, whether it was that I was not well, or that I was wearied out with over-excitement, I scarcely know, but I yearned for my own home and for our Mary's loving attendance, and notwithstanding entreaties and expostulations, I went off in the very midst of the merriment, much of which, though very uncongenial to me, was innocent in itself. I rode quietly home through the moonlight, accompanied
by my young attendant, and was soon in the seclusion of my own bedroom, alone for the night.

Everything seemed doubly still after the noise and hilarity and excitement of the day, and yet it was very pleasant to me. I lay on my pillow looking out through the parted curtains at the soft moonlight that fell over everything, glad to think that my brother was so happily married, and devising all sorts of plans to improve the house and prepare for the return of bride and bridegroom.

Should I be in the way? I did not think so. I was to retain my own rooms, and to have perfect freedom over the rest of the house. But I did wonder if I should not feel at times shut out in the cold, in spite of all Lottie’s winning kindness and Gussy’s brotherly love—it was in the nature of things that it should be so; and then a little yearning stole over me for a companionship in which there should be “One spirit,” where the hopes, and aspirations, and labour should be one.

CHAPTER XIV.

HAND IN HAND.

“Walking in newness of life.”—ROMANS vi. 4.

Winter again, wild and stormy. The trees of our garden were many of them shorn of their leaves. The cedars lifted bare branches to the leaden sky, but the lawns were green with the heavy rains, and there was abundant promise of much beauty when the cold and dreary winter season had passed.

Even in the winter there was much that was lovely
about "The Cedars," and I loved the place in its every aspect, for it was now my home, and had been so for many months. Even while I half unconsciously yearned after it, the companionship I so desired and so needed was not far distant; and Kent and I were truly of "one spirit," walking in one way.

There was nothing marvellous in this new phase of our friendship. It came about very simply, and almost unconsciously, as I said, on my part. I never knew till long after that thoughts of me had strengthened his resolve to settle in his native land, that the hope of winning me had hastened his return, and cut short the continental tour he had been so thoroughly enjoying till that thought came, and then he said to himself, "If she will give herself to me, we can finish our travels together at any future time and at our leisure. If I can only find her as I left her, a simple-hearted Christian and with no other claim on her love, and I can gain her heart, it is all I need."

And so, with this purpose he had come, but so nicely concealed beneath the garb of friendship that as a friend only we had received and welcomed him.

And then followed many days, many happy days of talk and companionship; for "The Cedars" were only a pleasant ride from our house, and Kent was an admirable horseman. He was with us every Sunday after Gussy's and Lottie's return home, sometimes at our house, sometimes with us at Jenny's. Other people, looking quietly on, saw what for a long time I scarcely suspected—that, being "of one spirit," there could be but one result. But they were wise
enough to let things take their course, and that “course,” under such judicious treatment, for once “ran smoothly.”

It was one evening, just at the gloaming. I had been singing for Kent a favourite hymn of his, and of mine—“Nearer, my God, to Thee.” How the words seemed to thrill my very soul as I uttered them! There was a great hush in the room as I rose and walked to the window, and stood looking out at the half crescent of a moon that was very dimly throwing its light among the shadows of the trees. In and out of the shadow I could see Gussy and his wife walking “hand in hand” up and down the well-worn paths. Little stars were twinkling here and there; the rest was dark, blue immensity. How far off heaven seemed, and one’s heart’s cry was, “Nearer! NEARER!” I stood with clasped hands, looking out.

Presently Kent Templeton rose, and crossing the room, stood by my side.

“A near Christ—that is what we both want,” he said, with a deep breath, in continuation of the theme of the song.

“One seems so far off at times, amidst the bustle, and cares, and pleasures of this life,” I answered in a low voice, still looking upwards at the dark blue dome above me, with its points of light here and there, twinkling in and out in matchless beauty.

“The mists of earth—yes, they do hide Him from us; but ‘This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we have the petition that we desired of Him.’
Now, do you not think that our desire for greater nearness to Himself, for more of His sensible presence on our daily journey, must be in accordance with His will, and that we shall have it if we only ask?"

I could not answer; my heart was too full, and my throat throbbed so painfully with suppressed tears, that the words would not come.

"Bessie!" he presently said, and there was a thrill of deep emotion in his own voice now. "Do you think our walk would be less in the light if we go along 'hand in hand' together? Do not you think we might strengthen and encourage one another, bringing to mind by mutual sympathy the tenderness and love of our Lord, even should our pathway be overshadowed by clouds for a time? Am I asking too much of you? Am I presuming too much?"

How can I tell what I answered? What does it signify as to the words? or whether indeed there were words or not? It is enough that he understood the hand that I simply placed in his. It was taken in both his with a quick, glad pressure. And then in the dim shadow of the gloaming we knelt down together in the window, the quiet stars looking on, and gave ourselves up to each other and to God.

"Hand in hand" we have gone on since that memorable evening; not without our crosses, or even our cares, for earth has no perfect bliss. But we were journeying one road, together "walking in the light," and encouraging each other in seasons of darkness, from which even the brightest lives are not exempt. Kent and I, "hand in hand," were very happy in our lives and work.
"More and more, unto the perfect day." That has been fulfilled for Gussy. A grand fellow-worker he has proved, all the more so, perhaps, by that bright, bold, happy spirit of his, that attracted instead of repelled. Gussy became a very happy, earnest Christian, one to whom no work came amiss, so that it was for Christ or the advance of His kingdom. He walked truly in the light—upright in all his ways—and showed forth its brightness; and little Lottie, bright and happy, too, was a lovely helpmeet for him.

After all, good as these dear earthly fellowships are, we need our Father's hand every step of our way. We need to be reminded that "He is our Light," and that without Him our path would be dark and our steps would falter, in spite of all our loved ones could do to help us. It must be "Jesus only" from first to last—He, Himself—our Light!

THE END.
EVANS, Matilda Jane
Into the light
011098144 (325886)