

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NELL," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN the evening Waterhouse attended service at Luke's Church, as had now become a frequent custom. On coming out he generally met some of the Norrises, and walked home with them, and this happened, whether of design or not, most often on the Sundays when it was Grace's turn to go to evening service. However it might be, Waterhouse looked forward with eagerness to this quarter of an hour's walk, for Grace was never less inclined to stand on the defensive than on these occasions. It seemed as if she lost her thorns in church, and brought out with her nothing but sweetness and fragrance. Sometimes she spoke very little, but that did not disappoint Waterhouse, who, when he found her disinclined to talk, would converse with her mother or sister, whichever might be bearing her company, and while doing so would be sufficiently happy in the mere sense of her presence. Short delightful scraps of time were those snatched from the prosaic practical week for a dreamy unsubstantial bliss, which transfigured the dull streets more than did the tender evening light. Sometimes he would steal a look at Grace's face, which, sweet and solemn, would be turned towards the glowing west, or northward toward the distant hill. And his heart would swell, as he looked, with its urgent sense of her goodness and dearth. On this particular evening such a glorified walk had taken place, and Waterhouse always a happy man on such evenings, felt now the additional lightness of heart born of joyful expectations of the morrow. He had hardly dared to hope that his boldness would meet with the success that it did. He could scarcely understand the good fortune.

After he had had supper, he sat with a book in his hand, to which he paid but scant attention for Grace's words and looks that evening, down to the very most insignificant of them, were repeating themselves in his brain. Not one word or look had she ever given him which could, by even a lover's fancy, be interpreted as meaning encouragement, or even apprehension of his feelings. There was scarcely bitterness in the thought, however, for he had of intention been prudent—very prudent. He had felt the necessity of not startling her, of not damaging his chance by precipitance. The times were not yet ripe, she must know him, must learn to trust him before the idea of any such feelings should be presented to her, and there was time, plenty of time, to act with wise deliberation. There were no rivals in the way, no possible rival. The Norrises had no social circle. What an enlivening consideration that was! The only young man who visited them besides himself was Denston, and in that quarter there was abundant security. A man could not be in love with two sisters at once. Thus, indeed, he was surprised to hear a tap at his door. On receiving an invitation to enter, the visitor proved to be Kitty.

"Oh, Mr. Waterhouse," she exclaimed, hurriedly, "would your mind coming? Mamma, I mean, sent me to ask you if you would be so very kind as to see what Grace is doing. She is gone over the wall."

"Gone over the wall!" cried Waterhouse, starting up. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, haven't you heard them quarrelling? Such a dreadful noise! Grace thought the man was beating his wife, or the little lame boy, and she got a chair and went to the wall to look over, and then she jumped over. Mamma is so frightened, and so am I."

Waterhouse waited no longer than to take in the idea of Grace's situation. He rushed past Kitty, and made his way down stairs at very great speed. In the back garden he discovered Mrs. Norris and Hester—the former in a state of great agitation.

"Mr. Waterhouse, how good of you!" she exclaimed; "my naughty girl has taken upon herself to interfere in this tipsy brawl. I cannot think what will become of her."

"We will have her back in no time, Mrs. Norris," said Waterhouse, confidently, though feeling horribly alarmed as to what might have happened before now. "Take your mother in, Miss Hester; she has nothing on, and the night is cold. Leave the matter to me, Mrs. Norris."

It was a dark gusty night, heavy with clouds, and rain-drops were beginning to fall. Mrs. Norris and Hester reluctantly went in-doors to watch from an upper window.

"Go you in, too, Sarah," Waterhouse added, when he reached the wall, and found Sarah there. She was standing on the chair, straining eyes and ears to catch any intelligence that might arrive to either from the open door of the opposite house, through which a dim light issued. Waterhouse mounted the wall, and discovered a tub, which, standing bottom upwards on the opposite side, formed the means of descent. A few moments more, and he was at the door of the house, and his ear caught the sound of Grace's voice. The door opened into a back kitchen, and that into a room beyond, from whence the sounds proceeded. His impetuous course was checked; there was evidently no quarrelling going on there now. Grace was safe. Would she not be angry with him for interfering with her? It appeared the better plan to wait within earshot, ready to proceed further, if occasion arose. What Grace had said he had not caught distinctly, but with it came the sound of a woman sobbing, and now came a woman's voice.

"Oh, miss! he were drunk, or he'd never 'a' done it. He never laid finger on 'im afore."

"That I ain't," broke in a sulky deep voice; "and I'll lay yer to be so aggravatin', that I will."

"Your wife's excuse for you is a bad one, Mr. Potter," now came, in clear accents, from Grace; "but you will admit that you needed one, and that it was kind of her to make it for you. You may be sure that she would rather have had you strike her than your lame boy."

"Yes, that I would, bless 'is 'art!" sobbed the mother.

"Then, you should lay him not to be so aggravatin'." You're one as bad as 'other."

"Charlie," said Grace, "how did you offend your father? If you were wrong, you must beg his pardon."

"Lor, miss! 't ain't no matter o' use your speakin'; he'll be as bad as ever when your back's turned," interposed Mrs. Potter.

"Come, Mrs. Potter, it is you that are keeping it up now. See, now Charlie is going to make it

up with his father. If you will forgive and forget, Mr. Potter will do so to—won't you, Mr. Potter?"

"You didn't hurt me, father," now interposed a smaller, weaker voice.

There was a pause. Then Grace said—

"I will say good night to you all now. It is Sunday night, you know, when we ought to be all happy and good. Come for the soup to-morrow, Charlie. I hope the baby will go to sleep again Mrs. Potter."

Waterhouse, hearing Grace coming, retreated a little further into the darkness. Mrs. Potter followed her to the door, saying in a loud whisper—

"He is a little angel, Miss, if ever there was one on this blessed earth. His father 'it 'im that 'ard I but he'll be sorry for it to-morrow, if he ain't now."

"I think he is now," said Grace; "but do not provoke him with hard speeches. Good night."

"Good night, miss; and thank you kindly for coming in."

Waterhouse, meanwhile, feeling that if there were angel in the case Mrs. Potter had mistaken its identity, kept himself out of sight, and now followed Grace as she crossed the yard. He was afraid of startling her, but when she reached the wall Grace looked back and saw him.

"Mr. Waterhouse!" she cried.

Waterhouse came up to her.

"Do not be angry," he said, in a deprecating tone. "Your mother sent me; she was frightened for you."

"Why should I be angry?" she said, gently; "it was very kind; but there was no need. I was quite safe."

Waterhouse would have helped her to climb up to the wall. But as he held out his hand, she said—

"Wait—wait a moment. Are my mother and Hester over there?"

It was not so dark but that Waterhouse, looking at her, saw that she was very pale, and that her dark eyes shone liquid through tears.

"It is so terribly sad, and we can do nothing. Look at all those houses, and to-night, when we are safe and happy, there is so much misery and wickedness there. We seem so near to those people, and yet we are separated by such a gulf. I must stay a moment in the cool air before I go to my mother."

Grace turned her face upwards to catch the wind. Waterhouse had not answered her, but still stood silently looking at her. As if there was some subtle influence conveyed by that silence, a sudden consciousness swept over Grace, which at once wrought a change in her manner and speech.

"I will go in now," she said, in her usual quick tones. The wall was easily mounted, for the little urchins belonging to that side had succeeded in making foot-holes, by which they could clamber to the top. Waterhouse sprang down on the other side, and, holding out his hand, said—

"Will you jump?"

Grace jumped lightly, and then walked to the house in silence. Mrs. Norris was cordial in her thanks for the service Waterhouse had rendered. But it seemed to him that he heard nothing but the rather grave "Good-night!" which came from Grace.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE THE START.

Kitty was awakened next morning by the sunlight streaming into her garret window. She had fallen asleep in such a state of ecstatic anticipation, mixed with dread of a wet morning, as would have kept an older person awake all night; and she awoke in the brilliant sunshine to a sense of realized and perfect bliss. Kitty possessed the glorious gift of youth, which we never appreciate while it is ours. The anticipated pleasure was pleasure when it came, and did not turn to dust and ashes in her mouth, as is very frequently the experience of those who have lived a little longer in this world of complicated emotions. Kitty's sisters were not so fortunate. The morning found Grace too anxious, Hester too excited for perfect easy pleasure. Neither had slept till long after she had laid her head on the pillow, and neither knew exactly what kept her awake. Perhaps we, who regard their sensations from a superior vantage ground, may be more penetrating. With regard to Grace, we have the advantage over her of knowing that Waterhouse, as he stood by her in silence that evening in the garden, was possessed by such overwhelming feeling as could not fail to produce some kind of effect, silent though it was. Grace did not know it as we do, but she was at the time vaguely alarmed, and at night the idea that Mr. Waterhouse might have fallen in love with her did actually cross her mind. It is true that she rejected the idea, that she was amazed at herself for entertaining so causeless a one. She had not believed herself so silly and so vain. Mr. Waterhouse had shown her extreme kindness and friendliness, but of so open and unsentimental a kind as to prevent the possibility of suspicion. So she argued with herself, but fell asleep at last with a residue of unbelief in her mind which still lurked there when she awoke in the morning.

Grace always brushed and coiled her mother's still abundant and glossy dark hair, and the occasion served for confidential chat. This morning Mrs. Norris observed—

"After all, Grace, it is really very convenient to have a gentleman in the house."

Grace, as she stood behind her mother's chair, felt the blood rushing into her cheeks. She answered—

"When mothers have such harum-scarum daughters," while inwardly upbraiding herself for that senseless blush.

"I do not think," continued Mrs. Norris, "that the plan has turned out badly. I think it has justified itself. I was very doubtful at first; but you would have your way. You compelled me to try it, Grace."

"Like a self-willed undutiful child as I was."

"No, my dear; I do not say that. I was, perhaps, a little too timid. I saw dangers which—But I do think we have been most exceptionally fortunate in our lodger. I am sure I am deeply thankful that he was led to come to us in so unexpected a manner."

Mrs. Norris had never spoken in this way before. Though Grace felt sure her mother was satisfied with the result of the experiment, the satisfaction had never been thus openly expressed, not even when the new carpet had been laid down in the dining-room, amid congratulations and beaming looks.

Her mother soon after went down stairs; and Grace, left alone, opened the window, and stood for a few moments looking out. It was assuredly a glorious morning—clear and brilliant and warm, and a thrill of delighted anticipation ran through her frame. She was to see the woods, to be hours in the country—nothing could prevent

her rejoicing in that. She smiled half-mockingly as she mused over her mother's remarks, and the irony of their occurrence this morning, of all others, when, for the first time, she herself was entertaining suspicions of this perfect lodger. How her mother had insisted upon giving her (Grace) the whole credit of the scheme at the very juncture when she would have been, for the first time, glad to know that the responsibility of it was not hers!

But was she to be the one, by these unfounded imaginations, to spoil the harmonious working of her own scheme? Absurd! Grace gave herself a little shake, and turned away from the window. As she went down stairs, she firmly resolved that no such result should arise; nor would she spoil her day's pleasure by dwelling on it.

Kitty was almost too excited to eat, and if the lightest of summer clouds flitted across the sun, looked ready to cry. Hester also was too excited to make a good breakfast, but it was in a different way from Kitty. Here was suppressed excitement, and only showed itself in the unusual brightness of her eyes and the alertness of her movements. After breakfast a good deal of work had to be scamped through. At ten o'clock they were to start. The girls had no dainty picnic attire to array themselves in—nothing but their shabby winter clothes on this brilliant spring morning, when shabby clothes looked their shabbiest. But they were neither vain nor inclined to discontent, and they were quite used to being shabby; so they buttoned their worn gloves, and assumed the economically dark hats with no decrease of pleasurable excitement. Hester was the only one who had even given the matter a thought. It must be confessed that she sighed a little as she glanced at herself in the glass, and wished for a white dress and just the kind of delicate shawl that would become her. Grace, standing with her back to the door, was mending a hole in her mother's glove, and Kitty was at the window, when Sarah came in and delivered a note to Hester. No one observed the occurrence, or that Hester turned very pale and went out of the room.

"As we are to take no lunch with us," Mrs. Norris was observing, with a grave face, "I fear Mr. Waterhouse means to take us to an hotel. It will be very expensive."

"An hotel," cried Kitty, "how splendid!"

"If you said that to him, mother, he would tell you he had handfuls of gold to throw away. He is really vulgarly rich," said Grace, with a face of comic disgust, "but I suppose we must put up with the vulgar."

At that moment, moved by some impulse, Grace turned round, and saw that Mr. Waterhouse himself was standing at the open door. She started violently.

"I beg your pardon," said he, for startling you. I came to say that you will need plenty of shawls. It will be cold, I am afraid."

Had he heard what she had just said? Would he know it was the merest joke? Grace fancied his face was rather red. She knew her own was so. She made some civil remark, exactly to what effect she did not know. He was turning to go away again, when Kitty excited general attention by what could with accuracy be only termed a scream—

"Oh! Grace, mother, look!"

Observation through the window discovered to the others an elegant dark-green wagonette, with a pair of prancing horses, in process of being drawn up before the door of No. 47.

"Oh, Mr. Waterhouse!" said Mrs. Norris, in a tone of distress, turning round from the window.

"What is the matter?" asked Waterhouse, with affected carelessness, coming forward. "I see the wagonette is here in capital time. I thought it would be pleasanter for me to drive you than go by rail. I hope you don't think it too cold for you or for Denston?"

Waterhouse addressed Mrs. Norris, but he cast an anxious glance towards Grace, who, feeling too strongly the additional emphasis conveyed by this new development on her malicious speech, could neither look nor speak. Her usual readiness had deserted her, and while her mother said the proper things to Mr. Waterhouse, she still stood looking out of the window, with her hands on Kitty's shoulders.

"Oh, look!" cried Kitty, when sufficiently recovered from her ecstasy to be able to speak, "there is Mr. Denston at the window over the way; he is waving his hand to us; he has got his coat on. Oh, won't it be lovely!"

At the same moment the front door was heard to open and shut, and Hester was seen to come out and to cross the road.

"Why, what is Hester about?" exclaimed Grace. I hope she won't keep us waiting. I will run and fetch some wraps, Mr. Waterhouse, and then we shall be quite ready."

Grace felt as though the brightness were somehow gone from the morning. Why should she say so stupid and unkind a thing, even though Mr. Waterhouse had been a hundred miles out of hearing? She bustled about to get the shawls, and Mr. Waterhouse helped, and brought his travelling rug, and they spoke to each other just as usual, but Grace was certain he had heard, and was hurt by her speech. The front door was opened, the man stood holding open the door of the wagonette, but Hester and Denston were still waiting for.

In order to understand what the impatient group, now waiting on the steps, were quite at a loss to account for, it will be necessary to retrace some links in a chain of small events which had led to this result. The day before, earlier on that same Sunday evening which saw a subtle change pass over the relationship between Grace and Mr. Waterhouse, Hester had been engaged in reading aloud to Miss Denston. Mr. Denston, sitting as usual some distance from the two, was evidently absorbed in his own occupations. By-and-by Miss Denston went to sleep, and Hester, who had been reading a long time, stopped to rest. Glancing up after a moment or so, she saw that Mr. Denston was looking at her. He smiled, hesitated, then rose, and, stepping softly, brought across to her the book he had been reading. Speech there could not be, on account of the sleeper, but he put the book open into her hands, and pointed out with his finger some verses. He returned to his seat, leaving Hester too much agitated to be able for a few moments to take in the meaning of the page before her. The confidence which had been shown in bringing it to her brought a strangely keen pleasure, but the transparency, the pallor, of the hand which had for a moment rested on it brought an almost keener pang. When at last she was able to read the verses, she found they were called "Camera Obscura." The book was the memoir of Dr. G. Wilson, of Edinburgh.

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

SECOND QUARTER.

JESUS AND ABRAHAM

LESSON XII, June 20th, John viii, 31-34, 44-59; memorize verses 32-36.

GOLDEN TEXT—Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.—John viii, 56.

TIME—The next day after our last lesson.

PLACE—Jerusalem, in one of the temple courts.

INTRODUCTION—Jesus returned to the temple the next day after our last lesson (viii, 2), where crowds still assembled, and taught first in the court of the women where the treasury chests were placed (viii, 20), and afterwards in one of the porches around the court of the Gentiles. Here his words convinced many, and they believed on him. To some of these he spoke the opening words of the lesson.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES—31. *Disciples*: learners, those who go to school to Christ, taking him for their teacher, and learning to be good like Jesus. 32. *Make you free*: from sin, from prejudice, from bad habits, from fear of punishment, free to do right. 33. *Never in bondage*: personally. They were never slaves, though subject to the Roman government. 34. *Servant*: slave. Of sin: because a sinful heart and sinful habits would not let them do as they wished; as people are sometimes slaves of intemperance. They also had to suffer against their wills. 37. *Seek to kill me*: chap. vii, 32, 44. 38. *Seen with*: in heaven. 44. *A murderer from the beginning*: by tempting the human race in Eden he brought death into the world, and so all men die. 48. *A Samaritan*: an enemy of the Jews, who would misjudge them. 51. *Never see death*: his existence will never cease. Death to him is but a change from life here to life in heaven. 56. *Abraham rejoiced to see my day*: in promise, by faith (Gen. xv, 4-6; xlii, 16-18). My day refers to the times of the Messiah, the Gospel dispensation. *He saw it*: in heaven he saw Christ come on earth, as we know Moses and Elijah did (Luke ix, 30, 31). 58. *I am*: because he always existed (John i, 1-3).

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS—Continuing in Christ's word.—Disciples.—The glorious liberty of the children of God.—Slavery of sin.—The children of that whose likeness we bear.—v. 51.—v. 58.

LEARN BY HEART vs. 31, 32, 34; Rom. viii, 14-17, 21.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY—Where did Jesus go after the last lesson? (Chap. viii, 1.) When did he return to the temple? (viii, 2.) Where in the temple did he teach? (viii, 20.) What was the result of his teaching? (viii, 30.)

SUBJECT: THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

I. **THE CHILDREN OF GOD** (v. 31).—What did Jesus say to those who believed him? What is to continue in his word? Why are none of his disciples? What is a disciple? What qualifications has Jesus as a teacher? What are the lessons to be learned in the school of Christ? (v. 32. Gal. v, 22, 23. Eph. iv, 13.) Out of what books does he teach them? (Ps. cxix, 9, 71; xix, 1, 7.)

II. **THEIR GLORIOUS LIBERTY** (vs. 32-37).—What would knowing the truth do for them? What is the freedom here spoken of? What does Paul say of it? (Rom. viii, 15, 21. Gal. v, 1.) How does the Son make us free? Who does Christ say are slaves? Can you show how this is true? Do people generally think that to be a Christian is to be free? Why not? Can you show why he only can be free? Describe this freedom. Why cannot those who do wrong be free? Give examples of slavery to bad habits. To past sins or crimes.

III. **CHILDREN AND HEIRS** (vs. 38, 44-50).—Who was the father of Jesus? What had he seen with him? How did he prove that God was his father? Who did he say was the father of wicked men? How did they prove it? How may we know whether we belong to God? How did the Jews argue against Jesus? Why do not all believe on Jesus since he speaks the truth? Has any one ever found any fault in him? How did Jesus honour his Father?

IV. **THEIR TEACHER** (vs. 51-58).—What is said of his sinlessness? (v. 46.) What promise did Jesus make to those who believed him? How did this show his power? How is it true that Christians never die? What did the Jews say to this? How did Jesus show that he was greater than Abraham? What did Christ mean by "my day"? When had Abraham seen Christ's day? (Gen. xv, 4-6; xlii, 16-18.) What comfort do you obtain from the greatness of Jesus? How does it give confidence in his teaching?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. We prove ourselves true disciples by continuing to study and obey Christ's word.

II. Jesus Christ is a wise, loving teacher, knowing all things.

III. We are to learn in Christ's school to be like him, holy, true, righteous, loving, and hence fitted to dwell with the saints in heaven.

IV. Christ teaches us out of his word, by his works, his example, the discipline and duties of life.

V. Becoming Christ's disciples gives us true freedom.

VI. This liberty is freedom of Christian action, freedom from sin, from bad habits, from fears, from overburdening cares.

VII. We know whose children we are by the family likeness in our characters and actions.

REVIEW EXERCISE—(For the whole school in concert.)—16. What did Jesus say to his disciples the next day in the temple? (Repeat v. 31.) 17. What promise did he make to them? (Repeat v. 32.) 18. Who are bond servants? (Repeat v. 34.) 19. What further promise did he make to his disciples? (Repeat v. 51.)

A FLOWER has been discovered in South America which is only visible when the wind is blowing. The shrub belongs to the cactus family, and is about three feet high, with a hook at the top, giving it the appearance of a black hickory cane. When the wind blows a number of beautiful flowers protrude from little lumps on the stalk.