

"You shall hear presently. You came to me and told me of your joy. I was already, by God's mercy, one of the priesthood to which you now belonged. You asked me to rejoice with you. I did so. That, too, was a solemn time. To belong to the Church of God was held by you to be a joy as great as it was real."

"It was," said Elinor, as her uncle rested. "How could it well be otherwise?"

"How, indeed! You met in this room a few Christian friends, gathered for social prayer. In your heart's joy you gave me leave to gladden them with tidings of the change wrought in you by the power of God. They prayed, one after another, and you were deeply moved. That too, was a serious hour. There was no trifling then. Zion was once again 'the city of your solemnities.'"

"Dear uncle," interrupted Elinor, "let me ask, once more, when has it been otherwise?"

But without noticing her words Mr. Barnes went on. "You wished to declare your faith before the members of the Church of Christ residing in this place, and you wished also to let the unchanged ones around you know that you had seen light in God's light, and, though still 'in the world,' desired no longer to be 'of it.' To both these duties you attended in due time. The Church rejoiced, and many of the thoughtless ones of your acquaintance were awakened; so that these seasons were deeply solemn; and you with solemn feelings stood forth before the world, as citizens of Zion, 'the city of our solemnities!'"

Here Mr. Barnes looked earnestly at his auditors. Their tears were dry, and they were listening attentively; but upon Elinor's face there was a deepening tinge of colour.

"I excite you?" said her uncle tenderly. "You guess what I am about to say, and you are troubled? And you, Grace, are not strong. I will talk of all this another day."

They both protested against this, and urged him to go on, saying that his reproofs were ever too gentle to wound, his counsels too valuable to be postponed. And he, remembering that the time might be but short, could not refuse to grant them their request.

"You have been punctual and regular in your attendance on public worship. You have been equally punctual and regular at prayer and church-meetings; but in regard to these things Zion has *not* been 'the city of your solemnities.'"

The colour rose from Elinor's cheeks to her clear brow, while Grace cast an imploring look at Mr. Barnes as if entreating him not to be too severe.

"We have had difficulty in procuring supplies"—

"Indeed we have, dear uncle," said Elinor, impetuously. "Of all the preachers—"

"Stay, stay, and hear me out. We have had difficulty in procuring supplies. Some of the friends who have preached during my illness have given but little satisfaction to their audience. You have heard them—carpingly; have taken mental note of every peculiarity; have been unmerciful to provincial or ungrammatical expressions; have ever been 'lying in wait' for something at which to smile on your return. I, indeed, have heard but little of all this, but a little is a key to the whole. True, your new friends—the G.'s have stimulated you by their wit and by their love of amusement; but I ask—is it *right*? and your hearts answer—*no*. Dear girls, the preacher is a member of Christ's church; many of the hearers have the same high privilege; and you have called yourselves by that great name; by you and your fellow-Christians the public worship of God is supported, that you, and the world around you, may learn of Him. Be careful then, and trifle not in such an hour. Rather let Zion, in all seasons, be 'the city of your solemnities.'"

"But if the preacher should make some gross blunder?"

"Regret, but never ridicule, his error."

"And if he be thoroughly uninteresting?"

"Pray for him, and remember that he may be interesting to some one else, seeing that different persons have different tastes!"

"You are right, uncle, and yet I think our deacons are wrong in not getting better supplies," said Grace, very seriously.

"In other words—are wrong in not performing impossibilities! Did you ever pray for the deacons in regard to this difficulty of arranging services?"

"I must say—*no*," said Grace.

"And I too," said Elinor, with self-reproach. "But I will no longer neglect to do so."

"Again," said Mr. Barnes; "our people are illiterate; despised by the learned among men, but not, thank God, despised of the All-wise. At our prayer-meetings you have