

may take us up to God ourselves. We are to live by the day, not as butterflies, which are creatures of a day, but as mortal, yet immortal, beings belonging to Eternity, whose mortal life may end to night, whose longest life is but an ephemeral fragment of our immortality.

Evelyn seems very much aloof from the world about her. In society sometimes she becomes animated, and flashes brilliant sayings on all sides. But her wit is mostly satirical; the point is too often in the sting.

At present, I believe, she has passed sentence on me as Pharisical, because of something I said of the new oratorio of the Messiah. At first it seemed to me more heavenly than anything I had ever heard; but when they came to those words about our Lord's sorrows, "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and around us there was, not a hush of shame and penitence, but a little buzz of applause, suppressed whispers, such as "Charming!"—"What tone!"—"No one else can sustain that note in such a way!"—and at the close the audience loudly clapped the singer, and she responded with a deep theatrical courtesy—I thought of "When I survey the wondrous cross," wished myself in Dr. Watts' chapel, and felt I would rather have listened to any poor nasal droning, which was worship, than to such mockery. I could not help crying.

When we were in the house again, Evelyn said,—

"You enjoyed that music, Kitty."

"No, Cousin Evelyn," I said; "I would rather have been in Aunt Henderson's chapel at Hackney."

"Your taste is original, at all events," she replied drily.

"To think," I said, "of their setting the great shame and agony of our Saviour to music for an evening's entertainment, and applauding it like a play! One might as well make a play about the death-bed of a mother. For it is true, it is true! He did suffer all that for us."

She looked at me earnestly for a few moments, and then she said coldly,—

"How do you know, Cousin Kitty, that other people were not feeling it as much as you? What right have we to set down every one as profane and heartless just because the tears do not come at every moment to the surface. The Bible says, 'Judge not, and ye shall be not judged;' and tells us not to be in such a hurry to take the notes out of other people's eyes."

I was quite silenced. It is so difficult to think of the right thing to say at the moment. Afterwards I thought of a hundred answers, for I did not mean to judge anyone unkindly. I only spoke of my own feelings. But Evelyn has retired into her shell, and evades all attempts to resume the subject.

This morning at breakfast Cousin Harry (of whom we see very little) spoke quite as an ordinary occurrence, of a duel, in which some one had been

killed, in consequence of a quarrel about a lady; and of another little affair of the same kind ending in the flight of a lady of rank to the Continent.

I asked Evelyn afterwards what it meant.

"Only that some one ran away with some one else's wife, and the person to whom the wife belonged did not like it, and so there was a duel, and the husband was killed."

"But," I said, "that is a dreadful sin. Those are things spoken of in the Ten Commandments."

"Sin," she replied, "my scriptural cousin, is a word not in use in polite circles, except on Sundays, as a quotation from the Prayer-Book. We never introduce that kind of phraseology on week-days."

"Do these terrible things happen often, then?" I asked.

"Not every day," she replied drily.

"The next thing you will be thinking is, that you have lighted on a den of thieves. A great many people only play with imitations of hearts in ice. For instance, mamma's little amusements are as harmless to herself and all concerned as the innocent gambols of a kitten. The only danger in that kind of diversion," she added bitterly, "is, that it sometimes ends in the real heart and the initiation being scarcely distinguishable from each other."

The easy and polished world around me no longer seems to me empty and trifling, but terrible. These icicles of pleasure are, then, only the sparkling crust over an abyss of passion, and wrong, and sin.

There is excitement and interest enough, certainly, in watching this drama, if one knows anything of what is underneath,—the same kind of excitement as in watching that dreadful rope-dancing Cousin Harry took us to see at Vauxhall. The people are dancing at the risk of life, and more than life. The least loss of head or heart, the least glancing aside of one of these graceful steps, and the performers fall into depths one shudders to think of.

I trembled when I think of it. Dull and hard as the religion seemed to me at Aunt Henderson's, it is safety and purity compared with the wretched, cruel levity, this dancing on the ice, beneath which your neighbours are sinking and struggling in agony.

Religion is worth something as a safeguard, even when it has ceased to be life and joy.

The sweet hawthorn which makes the air fragrant in spring is still something in winter, although it be only as a prickly prohibitory hedge.

Evelyn looked at me one day with her wistful, soft look, and said very gravely,—

"Kitty, I believe you really do believe in God."

"You do not think that any wonder?" I said.

"I do," she said solemnly. "I have been watching you all this time, and I

am sure you really do believe in God; and I think you love him. I have never met any one who did since my old nurse died."

"Never met with any religious person!" I said.

"I did not say that," she replied "I have met with plenty of religious persons. Uncle and Aunt Henderson, and several ladies who almost shed tears over their cards, while talking of Mr. Whitefield's 'heavenly sermon,' at Lady Huntingdon's—numbers of people who would no more give balls in Lent than Aunt Henderson would go to Church. I have met all kinds of people who have religious seasons, and religious places, and religious dislikes, who would religiously pull their neighbours to pieces, and thank God they are not as other men. At the oratorio I thought you were going to turn out just a Pharisee like the rest; but I was wrong. Except you and my old nurse, I never met with any one who believed, not in religion, but in God; not now and then, but always. And I do wish, Cousin Kitty, I were like either of you."

"Oh, Cousin Evelyn," I said, "you must not judge people so severely. How can we know what is really in other people's hearts? How can we know what humility and love there are in the hearts of those you call Pharisees; how they weep in secret over the infirmities you despise; how much they have to overcome; how, perhaps, the severity you dislike is only the irritation of a heart struggling with its own temptations and not quite succeeding? How do you know that they may not be praying for you even while you are laughing at them?"

"I do not want them to pray for me," she replied fiercely. "I know exactly how they would pray. They would tell God I was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; they would thank him for having, by his distinguishing mercy, made them to differ; and then they would express a hope that I might be made to see the error of my ways. I know they would, for I heard two religious ladies once talking together about me. One asked if I was a believer; and the other, who had expressed great interest in me and sought my confidence, said she 'was not without hope of me, for I had expressed great disgust at the world.' She had even told Lady Huntingdon she thought I might be won to the truth. The woman had actually worked herself into my confidence by pretended sympathy, just to gossip about me at the religious tea-parties."

I endeavoured to say a word in defence, but she exclaimed,—"Cousin Kitty, if I thought your religion would make you commit a treachery like that, I would not say a word to you. But you have never tried to penetrate into my confidence, nor have you betrayed any one else's. I feel I can trust you. I feel if you say you care for me you mean it; and you love me as me, myself,—not like a doctor, as a kind of interesting religious case. Now," she continued in a gentler tone, "I am not at all happy, and I believe if I loved God as you do I should be. That may seem to you a very poor reason for wishing to be good, but it does seem as if God meant us to be happy; and I have been trying, but I don't get on. Indeed, I feel as if I got worse. I have tried to confess my faults to God. I used to think that it must be easy, but the more I try the harder it is. It

seems as if one never could get to the bottom of what one has to confess. At the bottom of the faults, censoriousness, idleness, hastiness, I come to sins, pride, selfishness. It is not the things only that are wrong; it is I that am wrong,—I myself,—and what can alter me? I may change my words or my actions, but who is to change me? Sometimes I feel a longing to fall into a long sleep and wake up somebody else, quite new."

I said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." It is *we* that must be converted, changed, and not merely, as you say, our actions—turned quite round from sin and darkness to God and light."

She caught at the words "as little children." She said, "Cousin Kitty, that is just the thing I should like—that would be like waking up quite new. But how can that be?"

"It seems to me," I said, "that it must be like the blind man, who believing in our Lord's words, and looking up to him sightless, saw. Looking to him must be turning to him, and turning to him must be conversion."

Then we agreed that we both had much to learn, and that we would read the Bible together.

Since then we have read the Bible very often together, Evelyn and I. But her anxiety and uneasiness seem to increase. She says the Bible is so full of God, not only as a King, whose audience must be attended on Sundays, or a Judge at a distance, recording our sins to weigh them at the last day, but as a Father near us always, having a right to our tenderest love as well as our deepest reverence.

"And I," she says, "am far from loving him best—have scarcely all my life done anything, or given up anything, to please him."

I comforted her as well as I could. I told her she must not think so much of her loving God as of his loving her;—loving us on through all our ingratitude and foolishness. We read together of the Cross—of him who bore our sins there in his own body, and bore them away.

I cannot but think this is the true balm for my cousin's distress; it always restores and cheers me—and yet she is not comforted.

It seems to me sometimes as if while I were trying to pour in consolation, a mightier hand than mine gently put aside the balm, and made the very gracious words I repeated a knife to probe deeper and deeper into the wound.

And then I can only wait, and wonder, and pray. It does seem as if God were working in her heart. She is so much gentler, and more subdued. And the Bible says not only joy and peace, but gentleness, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

I often wish Evelyn were only as free as the old woman who sells oranges at Aunt Beauchamp's door, or the little boy who sweeps the crossings; for they may go where they like and hear the Methodist preachers in Moorfields or in the Foundry Chapel. And I feel as if Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield could help my cousin as I cannot. If she could only hear those mighty, melting words of conviction and consolation I saw bringing tears down the colliers' faces, or holding the crowd at Moorfields in awe-stricken, breathless attention!

(To be continued.)