

Our Contributors.

BELL'S STORY.

How Bell Was Led to Confess Christ.

For a few weeks at first, after venturing her all upon Christ's faithfulness, Bell was happy, yes, very happy. Sometimes she tried to have quiet little talks with some of the younger children, but found that she had no skill to interest them, and these were dropped. Then one thought began to trouble her: she was believing in Christ, but she was not confessing him, and she knew she ought to do both. But what could she do? Whom could she speak to? With all the happy family intercourse, there was in this, as in many another Christian household, an habitual reserve as to the inner thoughts and feelings. Even Mr. Matheson, with his uncommon tact in leading his children to the interested study of the Bible, seldom broke his reserve as to himself or attempted to break through it in the case of others. He regretted that this was the case, but did not know how to help it. How could Bell open her mouth to tell the glad news? She shrank with indescribable timidity from the very thought. But must she not confess Christ? Must she not overcome? What could she do? She felt that she should tell her dear father, and well she knew what joy it would give him to know. But she could not—poor little Bell thought she could not—open her mouth on the subject. Still, conscience gave her little rest. The deep peace of safety in Christ did not leave her, but that made her trouble all the keener; it did seem so utterly mean to refuse this small trial when he had done, oh so much! for her. One day she was praying about it and asking guidance and strength. Then she took her Bible, and, looking to God to guide her to some passage that would settle her difficulty, she opened the book, and her eye fell direct upon Christ's solemn words to his disciples: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." Poor Bell's heart sank at the words—sank away down—for she felt in her inmost soul that she could not, she never could, open her mouth on the subject. She wept and prayed and trembled at her daring unfaithfulness, but she could not get the strength; her lips were shut and her joy was gone. Poor Bell was only a very little scholar in Christ's school. She had learned the first letters in the alphabet of trust. She had learned in the great matter of acceptance to trust Christ, but she had not yet learned to distrust herself. Before she could get one step farther in the Christian life she must know something of the truths contained in Paul's words: "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But the Good Shepherd was leading—tenderly "bringing the blind by a way they knew not."

The family had moved into the new house in December, and spent the winter there. But the painting had been delayed till the return of the warm weather. It was decided, as the summer opened warm and bright, to move back again for a few weeks into the old house to leave the painters free scope and give the paint a chance to dry without damage. It was early June, a few weeks after they were thus re-established in their old home; dinner was over, and little Anna, now about two years and a half old, was can-

tering through the hall. Her little bare arms were thrown backward and forward, her body keeping time to the movement in happy childish fashion. Mrs. Matheson, passing through the hall at the time, met the little figure, and the mother's eye took in the pretty picture. Once only in after years did the writer know of her referring to the incident. With tender sorrow and thankfulness mingled she said, "When I met her that day in the hall my heart went out to her and up to God as I do not remember ever to have felt before, thanking him that he had given me so many dear little children and never taken any of them back again." An hour or two more and the little pet came in tired and feverish, and, climbing up into her mother's lap, fell into a troubled sleep. Diphtheria had taken its deadly grip upon her throat. Not fiercely but firmly that grasp was kept, and in a few days the end came. Lifting up her baby arms and her blue eyes to heaven, she breathed her spirit away. She was not, for God took her.

Harry caught the infection, and one or two of the others, but in their case the disease appeared in a mild form, and they were soon well again. But upon poor Bell it took a grip not unlike the one it had taken upon the little sister. She was usually up and dressed, and did not know what was the matter with her; but she felt so strangely weak and weary, and her throat would not stop being sore. One morning when she woke her throat felt so bad that the thought of death, perhaps not very far away, came vividly before her. Now the old terrors of death had quite gone; still, Bell did not want to die yet. She laid the matter before God as well as she could, and felt rested about it. Bell's parents were anxious too—more anxious than they allowed her to know.

They were now moved back into the new house, but not fairly established in it. Bell was sleeping for the night upon a mattress on the floor, covered with a navy blue homespun worsted quilt of her grandmother's making. She had been in bed some time, but was not asleep. She heard her father's step on the stairs, and watched the candle-light making queer progress about the walls as it was carried past the stair-railings. He came up the short turned stair at the end of the long one, and paused a moment at the door. Then he came softly in, holding the light outside, and stood still a minute. Bell was not asleep, and yet an unwillingness came over her to allow him the opportunity she felt he wanted, and she lay still. When she did not move he was gently withdrawing, but her heart smote her, and she lifted up her head and said,

"Father!"

He came in again, saying,

"Are you awake, Bell?"

She answered, "Yes, sir," and he allowed the light for a moment to fall upon her face.

"Bell," he said gently, "don't you think even children like you should be making sure about believing on the Saviour?"

Then her lips were opened. The confession that had lain heavy on her heart for weeks came out so easily as she answered, "Oh, father, I hope I do believe on my Saviour." She felt that her answer had taken him by surprise.

He paused a moment, almost as though

not knowing how to reply, and then commended her to simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only readiness that was needed, or that would stand trial, and then he bade her "Good-night." Then his steps went down the stairs again, and the candle-light was lost in the hall below. But he left a very happy little girl behind him. She had confessed Christ, and it was so easy. The duty was done that she had so dreaded and shrank, and she felt—humbly and thankfully she felt—that God himself had opened the way and enabled her to do it. And then her father! Oh how happy she was for him as his footsteps went sounding down the stairway! Well she knew that no other news she could have told him would have made him so glad as this. She lay there in the "banqueting house" with a beautiful banner over her. How glad God can make the hearts of those he is leading! There is no other gladness like it. Bell just wondered at God's goodness to her. He had been so much "better to her than she deserved." She knew she had shirked a duty, and yet God had borne with her, and opened the way for her and made it so easy. She knew she had deserved punishment instead. Her self-righteous little heart was amazed at such a way of dealing with such an offender.

This was Bell's second great lesson from the great Teacher—distrust of herself and a deeper trust in him. She did catch something of it that night, but she did not get it right. Again and again she lost it, and again and again she had to be taken back over the same ground.

Did Mr. Matheson understand more of his little daughter's heart than she supposed? or was it an understanding of the universal human heart that led him on the right track? The next morning he came up again, and sat down close by Bell's pillow, and they had a long talk. It was easy now, and so sweet to tell him all about it. One question he asked, and the conversation which followed made a lasting impression.

"Bell," he said, "now you have got hold of Christ's hand, do you think you will ever let it go again?"

"No, indeed, I will not," answered the impulsive child; and she meant what she said.

"Bell," he answered, "suppose you and I were going over a dangerous mountain-pass together, and you were afraid and took hold of my hand for safety. In the difficult places you would hold on very tightly, would you not? But tell me, Bell, would it be your hold on my hand or my hold of yours that would really be your safety?"

Bell saw it very clearly, and felt ashamed of her answer: "It would be your hold on me, father, that would really make me safe."

"Well, remember this: you lay hold upon Him, because he first laid hold upon you and drew you. You will keep hold upon him by his constant keeping hold upon you and drawing you. Which is the stronger grasp to trust to, Bell—his on you, or yours on him?"

So he taught her distrust of herself and trust in Christ. Did not this father guide his child wisely, being a co-worker with the great Teacher in leading her feet into the way of peace?

Echoes From Our Pulpits.

"Thy Kingdom Come."

Preaching from these words in Chalmer's church, Woodstock, on a recent Sabbath, Rev. Dr. MacKay said: "One very important way in which this prayer can be brought about is by the proper use of the franchise. There are those who tell us Christians should