

Our Story.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

BY AMELIA E. BARR, Author of "Jan Vetter's Wife," "The Daughter of Fife," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

It was the beginning of winter when she entered Rome again. The shadows of the night were darkening the streets, every one was weary with the day, and hastening to their home.

Grizelda led the way to the lofty old place in which Signor Donata resided. She knew that his living rooms were above his studio, and she went directly to them.

She knocked sharply at the door of the Signor's apartments, and Signora Donata herself answered the summons. She thought it had been her husband's signal, and was amazed to see the two women and the babe.

Above their own floor there was another, a great bare garret with a flat roof, whose height overtopped all the surrounding buildings. Grizelda resolved to furnish this with some degree of luxury, and there, with Caterina and Peppo, make her home.

In time this arrangement was carried out very perfectly. Unknown to all the world below her, Grizelda made there a beautiful home. Her child and her painting absorbed her; and within three years her pretty pictures had a reputation, and a very satisfactory value.

The little household went on with a placid monotony. Caterina served an early breakfast, and then dressed the child and took him with her to make such purchases as were needed.

All day Grizelda painted. Her ability was not of the highest order, but she worked with that patience which is almost genius. She finished every detail with such extreme faithfulness and nicety, her touch was so light, and her colouring so delicate, that her pictures attracted that very large class who are always more satisfied with painstaking work than with the crude efforts of the most original genius.

Still, there were days which even Roman sunshine and fortunate work could not brighten, days in which her life seemed altogether wrong and out of joint. Little domestic troubles not to be avoided in any home found her out.

Peppo was indeed the black sheep of the small home. He was always treading upon that dangerously narrow line dividing imprudence from crime. For Peppo liked money, and yet hated any prosaic way of getting money.

When these small trials came, they always set Grizelda thinking. She had then hours of eager dissatisfaction which made her throw down her brushes and walk rapidly the long stretch of her softly-carpeted room.

To her soul she complained—"This colourless, tranquil existence whose very name is 'Forgetfulness,' gives me only the constant anguish of patience."

and peaceful in the present life, and had the hopes of the future in reserve," she almost angrily denied the consolation.

"I may indeed be comforted of God when I am dead, but now! now! I am hungry for the joys He has forbidden me."

"Your own fault! Alas! Your own fault, Grizelda."

These dissatisfactions naturally grew with time, they became stronger and more frequent. For if Grizelda was dreaming of a wider life, Caterina also had longings for a cottage of her own, where she would be absolute mistress of her time and work and into which the neighbours would come and go with the village gossip.

Never had these human cravings been so decided in each heart as during that very spring time when Lord Maxwell brought his second bride to Blairgowrie. While Colin was hastening to Rome to secure, if still possible, the remains of his cousin, and carry them back to share the resting-place of her sister, Grizelda was herself unable to sleep by night or work by day for the passionate longing to see her home which possessed her.

One plan after another was formed and abandoned. She blamed herself for evading at the first the struggle which she must now enter with all the disadvantages which lapse of time entails on the complainant in any case.

When she had been mourned and forgotten it would be twice as hard for her friends to espouse her cause. Perhaps they might even feel the righting of Lady Maxwell to be a great wrong to the McNeils. Colin had possibly made other ties. There might be children in McNeil Castle, and her child might not be welcome among them. If she returned home and said, "I am here," would her friends be delighted or embarrassed? Would there be any place for her?

Such thoughts occupied her one morning so exclusively that she was obliged to give her mind up to them. There was an air of irritability in the home that fitted them. Little Archibald felt the influence. He did not venture from his mother's room, but lay curled up on a sofa. His childish face, with its wistful pathetic look, wounded her like a sword.

There was a knock at the door. She knew that it was Signor Donata's knock, and she was annoyed at the intrusion. Just then the sale of pictures did not interest her. But as soon as she entered she saw that his face had not its usual expression. She sent the child to the roof, and asked, "Is there anything strange, signor?"

"I will tell you, miladi. This morning that beautiful Miss Ferrars was to come to my studio at eleven o'clock. She had promised me a sitting for her likeness. But it is at ten she comes, and says, 'Pray, signor, excuse me today. There is to be a great service at the English church over the remains of that poor Lady Maxwell who was murdered nearly six years ago, and every one will be there.'"

"What said you to her?" "I said, it is late for Lord Maxwell to perform the rite which he ought to have observed immediately after Anatalla's confession; and she answered, 'Oh, indeed, the wretch has nothing to do with the service. It is the lady's cousin from Scotland, the handsomest of men, I assure you. We saw him yesterday walking barcheaded before the coffin, as it was carried into the church.' Miladi, pardon me! But, indeed, this seclusion of yours goes too far."

"Signor, the same thought is in my own heart. Will you take a letter to my Cousin Colin for me?" "I will go as soon as you have written it."

She sat down at her desk, and on a sheet of paper drew rapidly in one corner a view of McNeil Castle. Below it she wrote in her own free, flowing hand—

"The bearer of this will bring Mr. Colin McNeil to one who will give him all information regarding his cousin Grizelda."

Colin opened the letter with a haughty indifference, but his dark, ruddy face was an interesting study to the artist, and he watched keenly for the transformation he expected. It came instantaneously. Wonder, amazement, hope, impatience, passed like thoughts across it.

"Sir," he said, "I was less than civil to you. I have had so many useless and curious intrusions. Pardon me! This moment I am at your service."

Donata frankly took the hand offered, and the two men without delay went out together. Ten minutes' walk brought them to Donata's residence. At his own door he stopped and said, "Such help as I could give is now ended. You will find the writer of the letter on the next floor."

Perhaps Donata was a little offended at Colin's reticence and undemonstrative manner. But he quickly began to make excuses. "The man is proud as Lucifer; he would die rather than show he had a feeling. I daresay he will walk up to his cousin as if he had seen her yesterday, and say, 'Good morning, Grizelda, I hope you are quite well.'"

Donata had ever called there, and a sudden presentiment, a recognition almost spoke for her. She pointed to Grizelda's apartment.

"My mistress is present." He made no answer and no delay. In a moment he stood in Grizelda's presence. She gave a sharp cry. He opened his arms, and instantaneously he held her safely within them. The long tension snapped with tears. Grizelda felt them dropping upon her face as he kissed her. And tears with Colin meant the very extreme of emotion. Only for Helen's death and Grizelda's recovery had he ever shed them.

His coming into the house changed everything in it. Caterina felt the influence immediately. She knew that the end was near, and she met it with congratulations and smiles. She gave the household an air of festival. She sympathized with all her heart in the joy of the woman who had been lost and was found again.

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

LESSON VI, AUGUST 11, 1889.

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

1 Sam. xii. 1-15.

COMMIT VERSES 14-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things He hath done for you.—1 Sam. xii. 24.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Obedience to God the way to success.

DAILY READINGS.

M. 1 Sam. xii. 1-15.

Tu. 1 Sam. xii. 16-25.

W. Josh. xxiv. 1-16.

Th. Josh. xxiv. 16-28.

F. Deut. x. 12-22.

Sa. 1 Kings xviii. 20-40.

Su. Heb. iii. 1-19.

TIME.—B.C. 1075, (or 1095), May or June (ch. xii-xvii). Soon after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Gilgal (the rolling), (Josh. v. 9) between Jericho and the Jordan, the first camp of the Israelites in Palestine.

SAUL.—About forty years old, lately elected king of Israel. His home was at Gibeon in Benjamin, four miles north of Jerusalem.

SAMUEL.—About seventy years old at the end of his twenty years service as judge. He lived several years after this, and was the leading religious spirit of his age.

INTRODUCTION.—Saul had been chosen king, but not a few of the people refused to own his authority. But Saul's great victory over the Ammonites under King Nahash (xi. 1-11) established his position. On their return from the pursuit of the Ammonites down the Jordan, the army crossed the Jordan where their fathers had first crossed into Canaan, and came to Gilgal. Here was held a great assembly, and Saul was owned by all to be their king. The era of the Judges, nearly 400 years long, was now ended. The kingdom had begun.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. And Samuel said: he here publicly laid down his authority, just as Washington, in a farewell address to his army, gave back his authority as commander-in-chief. 2. My sons: see viii. 1-3. 3. Any bribe to blind mine eyes: a gift for the sake of buying the favour of a judge, to persuade him not to see crime in the giver. 6. It is the Lord: connect with v. 5, "He is witness, even the Lord," etc. 7. Stand still: listen. 9. Siera: the general of the Canaanites under King Jabin, at Hazor, near Lake Merom (Judg. iv. 13). Philistines: these oppressed Israel many times (Judg. iii. 31; x. 7; xiii. 1; 1 Sam. 19-22). Moab: under Eglon (Judg. iii. 12-30). 10. Baalim: see Less. III. 11. Jerubbaal: Gideon (Judg. vi-viii). Bidan: not named in the history, but probably Barak (Judg. 4-6, etc). Jephthah: Judg. 11. Samuel: 1 Sam. vii. 12-15. 12. Nahash: see 1 Sam. xi. 1-11. 14. Then: read it and. The conclusion is not stated, but was very clear.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—Saul.—Samuel.—The victory over Nahash (ch. xi).—Samuel's life.—Samuel's character.—The teachings of Israel's past history.—What is true success.—How may it be obtained.—The results of disobedience.

QUESTIONS.

REVIEW.—What change had been made in the government of Israel? Who was chosen king? In what way?

INTRODUCTION.—How old was Saul at this time? How long since he had been chosen king? What great victory established his throne? (ch. xi.)

SUBJECT: THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS. I. A SUCCESSFUL LIFE (vs. 1-5).—Where did the people assemble on their return from the victory over the Ammonites? (xi. 14, 15). For what purpose? How long had Samuel been before the people? (v. 2). What kind of a life had he lived? Who witnessed to his words? What can you tell about the life and history of Samuel? Name his good qualities. What do you find in him worthy of imitation? What lessons can you learn from his life? What influence does such a life have upon the community?

II. THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS TAUGHT BY HISTORY (v. 6-11).—What parts of their past history did Samuel recall to their minds? Tell the story of Siera. (Judg. iv. 1-24.) Of the Philistines. (Judg. xiii. 1; 1 Sam. xiii. 19-22.) Of Moab. (Judg. iii. 12-30.) Why were the people allowed to suffer so much oppression? What did God do for them when they repented? What judges were raised up for their help? Does God love to punish those who disobey him? (Ezek. xviii. 30-32.) Why does He do it?

III. THE TWO WAYS (vs. 12-15).—Would the change in government make any difference as to the way of success? What five things must the people do if they would prosper? (v. 14.) What truth like this had Moses taught them? (Deut. xxviii. 1.) What had Joshua taught? (Josh. xxiv. 14-24.) Is this as true of our own time and nation? Is it as true of us individually? What is a successful life? What becomes of those who disobey God? What can we do to help our nation to prosperity and success? In which of the two ways here described are we walking? PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. Lessons from the life of Samuel: (1) patriotism, (2) unselfishness, (3) a noble character and useful life makes success; (4) the best life is one wholly given to God from childhood.

II. Teachers should practise what they teach.

III. The past is the teacher of the present.

IV. God's book of Providence illustrates His written word.

V. Obedience to God is the only way to success.

VI. The hope of a nation is in righteousness and religion.—Peloubet.

HORRID HEATHEN RITES.

By late advices from the west coast of Africa, it is learned that a most revolting sacrifice has just taken place in the interior. A few months ago the old King of Eboe died, and, as is customary, traders from New Calabar went up to pay their respects to the new monarch. On their arrival the traders found the "Ju Ju" rites, performed on the death of the native king, still in progress, and about forty victims had been sacrificed. The old king was still lying in an open grave large enough to accommodate nine of the departed ruler's youngest wives, who had been murdered in the most cruel manner. Each of them had her ankles and wrists broken, so that she could neither walk nor crawl. In this maimed condition, and suffering most excruciating pain, the poor creatures were placed at the bottom of the grave, seven of them lying side by side. The king's body was then placed on them in a transverse direction.

Then the two remaining women were laid by his side. They were left without food or water to wait for death, which, however, it is said, did not come until after four or five days of intense suffering. In the meantime four men were stationed around the grave, armed with clubs, ready to knock backward any of the women who, despite their tortures and their pain, might manage to crawl to the side of the pit. In other parts of the town other human sacrifices were taking place. Suspended from various trees were the bodies of several men. They, too, were undergoing agonizing deaths, holes having, in most cases, been bored through their feet near the ankles. Through these holes ropes were drawn, and the men were tied to a high tree, head downward, and left to die.

BIBLE WORK THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

The indefatigable Dr. Cust has sent us pamphlets in which the endeavor is made, with his usual care and industry, to exhibit the amount of work done in translating the Scriptures in every part of the world. The general result is, that the Scriptures may be had in 79 European languages, in 111 Asiatic, 66 African, 33 American, and in 43 of the languages spoken in Oceania; the total number is thus 337. The sources of translation are indicated, but there is some difficulty in fixing what must be regarded as the source. The Efk version, for example, is credited to the National Bible Society of Scotland, while the version for the natives on the shores of Lake Nyassa is credited to the Free Church Mission. In both instances the versions were the work of the Missions, while the expense of publication was borne by the National Bible Society. Dr. Cust is of opinion that, as regards Europe, the work of translation is done, in Asia, however, much remains to be done. In Africa a vast stock of languages, spoken by one hundred millions, has yet to be turned into a vehicle of revealed truth. In North America the work is about finished, in Central and South America "a great harvest of Bible work has still to be reaped;" but in Oceania, in so far as relates to Polynesia and Mikronesia the work is nearly done. But Dr. Cust adds—"In Melanesia, New Guinea and its adjacent islands remain to be dealt with; and unhappy Australia, with a population of 70,000 to 80,000, and more than fifty languages, is unrepresented by any translation which is deemed worthy of being distributed."—Quarterly Report of the National Bible Society of Scotland.

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