

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE.

BY REV. J. H. McCARTY.

THERE was a gentle rap at the door of an old man's cottage, one cold December night, by the hand of a stranger seeking shelter from the storm that raged without. The venerable man rose with dignity and grace becoming his age and his nature, and bid the stranger enter.

"You are all alone," said the stranger to the old man, "I perceive."

"Alone, and not alone," said he, in a subdued and solemn voice.

"What may I understand, my aged friend, by your being 'alone, and yet not alone?'" said the stranger.

"Sir," said the venerable man, fixing his eyes upon his stranger guest, "this was once the home of a happy family"; and the old man arose and looked out of the window, as if to hail the coming of those he loved; but his heart seemed too full for utterance. He stood gazing on the darkness without; but not a word he spoke.

"Tell me your story," said the stranger to the lonely occupant of the cottage.

A moment of silence passed, and then the old man said:

"Many years ago there lived in this house a family whose hearts were bound in one. There used to be here a good and gentle woman; but she is not here to-night, sir"; and the old man wiped the falling tear from his withered cheek, and again walked and looked out of the window on the dark and dreary night. Returning to his seat, he fixed his eyes upon the blazing brands; and, after a moment's meditation, turning to the stranger, he said: "Once there were here three happy children, but they are not here to-night, sir"; and again he walked and looked out of the window. "Ah, she was a darling little girl, was Mary, with her bright eyes, her golden ringlets, and her loving little arms that she used to throw around my neck as I came home from my work, sir!" and the big tear stole down his cheek. He continued: "One day when I came home, Mary was sick. Her eyes were dull, her cheeks were feverish; and, sir, she died." And, walking to the window, he said: "Sir, she lies yonder; but it's too dark to see."

"Two little boys were left, sir; and you may be sure I loved them. One day the youngest was skating on the ice, and it broke through, and he was swept away down the current of the great river, and we never saw him again. Ah sir, Johnny was a beautiful boy. Then my eldest, and only one left, was seized with a strange sickness; and he died there, in that corner of the room, and we buried him along with Mary, sir, just over the ravine on that sunny knoll; but it's too dark to see." And the old man sighed as he walked to the window, and looked out on the wild, dark night.

"Then Agnes and I were all alone here; and then she poor woman, could not stand up under such blows. She grew pale and feeble; and, sir, one day she laid down on that cot, and said she was not well. She grew very sick, and the doctor said she must die. And she died, sir; and we buried her just over the ravine, along with Willie and Mary." And again the old man walked to the window, and looked out upon the pitchy darkness of the night.

And then he sat and looked with tear-dimmed eyes on the blazing fire of the hearth.

"Now, sir," said he, "I am all that is left of the family. First went Mary to her angel-home, then Johnny; then Willie and Agnes, to meet them on the shining shore. We are nearly all gone. I am all that is left."

And he walked across the room, and took from its place, on the shelf beside the clock, the old family Bible, brown with age, with tear-marks on many a page. He laid it on the table, and said:

"Stranger, Agnes and I used to read this book together every night and morning. We read it to our children. Now they are all gone away to the distant land, and I am left to read it alone. Here, stranger, I find my comfort. It tells me of a spirit-land, it tells me of heaven. I shall meet my dear ones again—my Agnes, my Willie, my Johnny, my Mary—by-and-by."

And, as he spoke of that better land, his face lost its look of sadness, his eyes grew bright with the hopes of the Christian.

"Yes," said he, "it will not be long. My locks, stranger, you see, are getting white. I am trembling now. I shall soon lie down by the side of my loved wife and children, just over there on the little knoll; but I shall hail them where they who meet shall never part."

And the venerable man ceased to mourn. His weeping was turned into joy.

So it is with us all. Our days are passing away, our home have a short history. One after another leaves this home on earth. Soon all will be gone. O, happy will it be if we all meet again! Earth has its ills, but heaven heals them all. Life has its sorrows, but heaven will pay us back with joys eternal, immortal.

A SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF THE MISSIONARY GOBAT.

FROM THE GERMAN.

AMONG the numerous petty princes who at that one disputed between themselves the sovereignty of Abyssinia fierce feuds were raging, at the period of which we speak. No one felt secure of his life, for faction and discord here ruled throughout the country, and many a peaceful traveller was put to death under the pretence of his being a spy. The missionary Gobat, now Protestant Bishop of Jerusalem, among others, had to fly for his life. He was, indeed, acquainted with a place of refuge, and felt quite sure that if it only could be reached, he would be in perfect safety. On the summit of a high and steep rock stood a convent, Debra Damo by name, to which there had formerly been a path, known to but few, and very toilsome, but perfectly safe. But this mode of access had at this time been blocked up by the monks, who had planted such a quantity of rapidly-growing brushwood over the steps which led to it as speedily to obliterate all trace of where they were. Another convent, indeed, was soon after this built down in the valley, but the monks had still no mind to betray the mode of approach to Debra Damo, and whenever they went to and from to their building-work at the foot of the rock they caused themselves to be let up and down with a rope.

Gobat knew well that this was the only means by which he could reach this coveted place of safety, and though he did not feel very hopeful of being able to avail himself of it, he thought he must try it, as offering him the only hope of escape. As he went along the narrow valley skirting the heights of Debra Damo, and looked up at the convent towering above him, he called out as loud as he possibly could for help. Five monks presently appeared at the edge of the steep rock, asked him what he wanted, and when they learnt that he was merely endeavouring to escape from their common foes, immediately let down the rope. Gobat wound it tightly round him, clambered up with both hands, and was safely drawn to the top of the rock, though he often shuddered when he felt himself getting too near the sharp, angular, jutting edges of the rugged cliff. Once on the summit, he felt perfectly at rest. He knew that, though the wild hordes in the hostile chiefs' pay laid waste fields and made havoc of homes in the valleys, no harm could come to him, secure on his lofty place of shelter. Frequently during his latter years has Gobat recounted this incident to his friends, pointing out at the same time that just as he was in danger from a mortal foe when in the valley, and only safe when mounted on a rock, so we have no security from our deadly enemies, Satan, the world, and our own evil hearts, till we have embraced the shelter offered us on the Rock of Ages—Jesus Christ. We ourselves, with our poor weak strength, are incapable of ascending the Rock; but the mighty rope of love, of that love by which the Father draws men to the Son, will, if we but accept the offered help, place us in safety by landing us in that secure refuge. When once the foot of our soul is stationed on the Rock we are in safety. Satan may rage and threaten, but it will be in vain. But one thing we must bear in mind, and that is, that it is only by *abiding* on our Rock that we are safe. On that word *abide* Gobat has always been in the habit of especially dwelling, frequently closing his loving exhortations with those words of the Apostle John in his First Epistle:—"And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

JANET.