

## Our Story.

## THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

BY ANNE M. BARR.

Author of "Jan Voller's Wife," "The Daughter of Eve," etc., etc.

## CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

TOWARD the close of the fifth year they began to talk together in a calm, fitful way of Colin's marriage. An heir to the great property they were amassing was an important thing. And the Laird had noticed with satisfaction that Colin had been more attentive than was his custom to pretty Rosa McNeil, the daughter of one of his own cousins. He permitted him to understand his satisfaction, but nothing definite was said on the subject. Indeed, it was not one which interested Colin much. He was a loyal lad, and the loss of Helen and Grizelda had given his heart a shock. The two fair girls who had been so sweet a part of his life and love—how could he forget them? As a matter of duty he felt that he must marry soon; but the bridegrooms of duty are not impatient ones.

Early in the spring of the sixth year the two men returned from Edinburgh to Edderloch after a very pleasant winter. They were talking over the usual routine of spring business as they were approaching their journey's end. The grey turrets of the castle were in view. A smile of content was on each face. Suddenly a carriage, drawn by two high mettled horses, passed them with an impetuosity that compelled McNeil's driver to make way for it. In the haste the Laird's older-fashioned and more cumbersome vehicle was nearly overturned.

But quick as the passing was, both McNeil and Colin saw the handsome insolent face of Maxwell bending slightly forward as if the *contraintemps* highly amused him. McNeil was furious. In the first outburst of his rage he dismissed the trembling old coachman, who could offer no apology but the very pertinent one "that he was scared of an accident and of some danger to the McNeil."

"So you made the McNeil give the middle of the road to the like of him! My own road, too! David, I'll never forgive you the insult!"

But when Brodick came to the castle they heard news which put all other things out of their minds. Maxwell was married again. He had just brought his wife and child to Blairgowrie. He must, then, have some certain knowledge of Grizelda's death, and how cruel it was in him to have withheld it!

The Laird was for Blairgowrie at once. Colin was on his feet to accompany him. But Brodick opposed the hasty movement. "Hurry is the devil's servant," he cried, "sit down, both of you. Ere you win Blairgowrie to-night it will be ten o'clock. I'm not going with two passionate men this night, and you are to go without me. You'll be better to have a witness to all that is said and done. And you'll get your thoughts together, and your tempers together, and be more able to speak like men with gentle blood in them when you have put twelve hours between Maxwell and your first passion."

In the morning it was decided that only the Laird and his friend Brodick should call on Maxwell. Colin had not the right of question; he was very hot-tempered; he was particularly hateful to Maxwell. If he voluntarily entered his house he put it in Maxwell's power to offer him insults that would be intolerable, and perhaps demand such an instant satisfaction as might put Colin in the power of the law.

Maxwell's treatment of McNeil was very different to what it had been in Rome. He kept the Laird and the minister waiting until he had finished his breakfast, and he took care to prolong the meal to his utmost desire. As the two angry men sat waiting they could hear his shrill, mocking voice and laughter keeping a kind of accompaniment to a woman's variable tones. When he came to them finally he was leisurely picking his teeth. His air was that of insolent happiness, and satisfied physical wants demanding of some intruder "what the d— do you come here for?" McNeil and Brodick looked almost god-like as they stood up with sternly-solemn faces to meet him.

"I want to hear about my child, Lord Maxwell. I presume you have some certain knowledge of her death?" "I must say, sir, that I think it very impertinent in you to bring such an offensive memory into my happy home. Of course she is dead. If you had paid as much attention to her fate as to your hotel, you would not have had any occasion to trouble me."

"I care nothing for your insults, lord. Tell me plainly of my daughter."

"Anatolia, a famous robber, suffered for his crimes two years ago. In his last confession, among a hundred other atrocities he described the carrying off of Lady Maxwell. The jewels you gave her were the temptation. A thrust or two from a stiletto made them Anatolia's property. He was so good as to inform the police where the remains might be found; if you care about the information your nephew is well acquainted with the Roman detectives. They will doubtless oblige him with the necessary instructions."

"Wretch! Double-dyed wretch! To

leave your wife without Christian burial! Give me now the directions!" "I really did not trouble myself with them."

"McNeil! McNeil!" and Brodick strode between the enraged father and his tormentor. Then turning to Maxwell he cried out: "Lord Maxwell, you are a hound, and you shall die like a hound, and none that love you shall be near you! Come, Laird! Come, my dear friend! You have suffered a great wrong, but this very wrong is the beginning of the righting. I am speaking beyond myself now, McNeil, but I know I am speaking the truth!—and God is above the Devil!" and so with short, emphatic sentences, he strengthened the distracted father until he had led him beyond the sight of Blairgowrie.

Then he encouraged him to weep and lament. Then he joined in his anger and endorsed his suspicions, and thus together they returned to the castle. Nothing of all that had been said was kept from Colin, and within an hour the young man was on the road to Rome. At least a burial among her kindred could be given to the unfortunate child of McNeil. Colin's dark face was on fire with anger and hatred. "I will find him out, dear uncle, if I go to the gates of hell for the information!" "Go to the gates of heaven, my lad; commit your way to God and His angels, and they will direct your steps."

They were the minister's last words as he held Colin's hand in adieu. A tight grip answered them, but he looked beyond the minister to where the outraged and bereaved father stood trembling with rage and sorrow; and the look was one the two men understood—*A life for a life.*

## CHAPTER XIV.—COLIN AND GRIZELDA.

The heart is its own fate. There are points from which we can command our life: when the soul sweeps the future like a glass, and coming things, full-freighted with our fate, jut out, dark on the edge of the mind.

Her soul dilated at the sound of doors That opened to the future.

UPON the whole the interview had been a pleasant one to Lord Maxwell. He rehearsed it with sundry additions to his lady, as they sat in the spring sunshine laughing over it. For the statements made to McNeil were substantially true, and had been so accepted by every one in Rome. But beyond this confession of Anatolia's there was a circumstance known only to Maxwell. The confession was, in fact, dictated by Maxwell. He had found that Julia's family had positively objected to a marriage between them until there was a certainty of Grizelda's death; and though he had no doubt of it himself, he could not bring Peppo to confirm his convictions.

One day he heard casually of the capture of Anatolia, and his condemnation. "Now that hope is over he will make a confession," said a Roman gentleman present; "they all do." These words set everything clear to Lord Maxwell. He easily procured an interview with the criminal. He found that it was still easier to induce him to add Grizelda's abduction and murder to the list of crimes in his confession. The man had the miserable vanity of his class. He desired his list to be a long one—the longest of his time; and besides, he was to get £50 for his complaisance. "Fifty pounds would buy a gold necklace for his mistress, and say some masses for his own soul." He looked on Maxwell's offer as a special favour of his patron saint.

This painted confession embodied the statement Maxwell made to McNeil. It was considered by every one satisfactory as to the fate of Lady Maxwell, and after it, the preparations for Lord Maxwell's second marriage with Miss Cassell went forward with the approbation of all concerned.

But plausible as the explanation of the mystery seemed, it was a lie from the beginning. Grizelda was living. Grizelda was in Rome, and she read with a mournful smile the assurance of her murder. It cut her still further off from the dead past; and she was glad to think that so long a time had gone by ere her father and Colin would have the certainty of her death. The sting of it was over. Who would weep again for what they believed was now a handful of dust?

Yet as she sat with the rudely printed confession in her hand she was a woman of splendid beauty. Between her and the cold sorrowful wife, whom Peppo had taken without a shadow of resistance from her husband's care, there was the difference of the pallid dawn and the glorious noon day.

She did not faint that night in Peppo's arms, as Maxwell supposed. On the contrary, she gathered strength with every step he carried her. And within a hundred yards from the road she was met by Caterina, who took her into charge with pitying words and tears.

She wrapped her fur mantle round her, for there was no time for a change of costume, and the two women silently and swiftly rode southward until after the day had broken. Then, in a lonely wood, Grizelda threw off the white robe stained with such sad memories. It was dropped into a hollow tree, and Caterina dressed her in a peasant's costume. She would have given her money and jewels to Caterina, but the woman would not touch them. "Your life for my life," she answered—"all else is too little payment."

It was the evening of the second day when they stopped at the door of a

cottage. They were in a secluded valley, and the cottage was surrounded by a vineyard. "It is your own, my lady," said Caterina. "Peppo was born here. He knows every one within fifty miles. You are as safe as if you were in England."

The assurance was very welcome. Grizelda was greatly fatigued—the fear of being re-taken had alone kept her in the saddle during the last twelve hours. She ate, and slept, and for three days heeded not her troubles. In sleep, she sank below their tide; awake, she was too mentally exhausted to consider her situation.

But in this interregnum of reason she really seemed to develop some new mental quality. Clearness of vision, intensity of will, were the dominant qualities of the Grizelda who woke to her new life. She was alone with Caterina. All was infinite peace and beauty around her. She had a sense of freedom and sympathy—that, for a short time sufficed for happiness.

Consideration came with the ability to consider. "What must I do?" She asked herself this question perpetually. "The first answer was naturally—'Go home to my father.' But no sooner was the answer given than her whole nature denied and opposed it. 'To be robbed and murdered was a calamity, but it was not a crime. But if she went back to her father, he would be compelled to defend her good name by prosecuting Lord Maxwell, or she must keep silence regarding her great wrong, and suffer the blame and scorn usually given to slighted wives."

She imagined the shame and trouble she would bring upon all the family of the McNeils—their inquiries, their advice, possibly their reproaches. She was only a woman out of favour with Fortune—who would believe her story? And she never doubted, also, that Maxwell's cunning and wealth would find plenty of contrary evidence. They might even doubt her honour and purity. But they could not slander a spirit. Always she came to the same conclusion. "I cannot go home to trouble all who love me. It is better they mourn me as dead than that they should come to regard me as a trial and a shame."

There was also a very important event to be considered in all Grizelda's plans. When the spring came she would, if God had so much mercy on her, have a child. Here she could rest in peace with Caterina until its birth. If Helen had been alive she would certainly have gone to her; but she dreaded the lonely castle, into which of necessity she must take with her an instant discussion of her wrongs.

"Till my baby comes—till I am strong to feel and to labour—I will be quiet. I will trust to Caterina." This resolution was the only one she found herself able to accept. It precisely fitted her physical and mental temper. She had the consciousness within herself that she was doing right.

The time passed like a peaceful dream. She let the new hope fill her life. Caterina went into the nearest towns and bought her all she needed, and she sat sewing prayers and hopes into the little garments she was preparing. She put the past with all its loves and sorrows resolutely behind her.

The child was born at the close of April. It was a fine boy, with all the physical traits of the McNeils—a rosy, healthy, laughing baby, that never by any trick of feature or contradiction of temper reminded her of its father. A wonderful baby it was to the two women, and somehow, the time slipped on until the hot season was upon them, and it was unsafe to move into the city.

For back to Rome Grizelda had determined to go. That was the one place that no mortal would seek her in. And she had her own plan for living there. "Indeed," she said to Caterina, "it is the brave who are not discovered. If I remain here some passing traveller will stop and recognize me."

(To be continued.)

## Sabbath School Work.

## LESSON HELPS.

LESSON V, August 4, 1889.

## SAUL CHOSEN OF THE LORD.

1 Sam. ix. 15-27.

COMMIT VERSES 15-16.

## GOLDEN TEXT.—By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.—Prov. vii. 15.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God guides us to the kingdom to which he calls us.

DAILY READINGS:

Mt. i Sam. ix. 1-14.

Lv. i Sam. ix. 15-27.

Jv. i Sam. x. 1-16.

Th. i Sam. ix. 17-25.

Fr. i Sam. x. 1-15.

Sa. Ps. li. 1-12.

Sw. Ps. lxxv. 1-20.

TIME.—B.C. 1075, shortly after the last lesson. (According to others, B.C. 1095.)

PLACE.—Ramah, Samuel's home, 4 miles north-west of Jerusalem.

SAMUEL, about 70 years old. Judge and prophet in Israel.

SAUL. (asked for).—Son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. He probably belonged in Gibeon. He was a giant in stature, probably seven feet high at least, and of noble appearance. His mental powers were sluggish. He

was diffident, affectionate, and brave, but impulsive, a good warrior, attractive and popular. At this time he was probably about 40 years old, as in ch. 13 we find he had a son old enough to distinguish himself as a warrior.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—We find a double leading by God. In the verses previous to the lesson, Saul is sent out to seek some strayed asses, and is unconsciously led to Ramah and to Samuel. 15. *Now the Lord, etc.* here Samuel is guided to Saul, and the choice of him as king. 16. *Save my people, etc.* this shows that the Philistines were gathered for an attack upon Israel, and this was probably one reason why the people were so anxious for a king. 18. *The seer: one who sees; a prophet.* 19. *The high place:* a hill where sacrifices were offered, there being no central place of worship. 20. *On whom is all the desire of Israel.* not that all Israel desired him, but to him would come all that was most desirable in Israel—the kingly power and wealth. 21. *Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes:* at the numbering, in Moses' time, it was next to the smallest (Num. i. 37), and it had lately been almost extinguished (Judg. x. 46). 22. *The parlor:* the priest's chamber. The leaders; the rest of the people worshipped outside. 23. *Samuel said, etc.* this was to show Saul that his coming had been foreseen and prepared for. 25. *Commanded with Saul:* on the state of the country and the duties of a king. *Upon the top of the house:* the most comfortable place in summer was the flat roofs of the houses. 26. *The spring:* the dawn, the day-spring. *Samuel called Saul to the top of the house:* not to the top, but upon the top, where Saul had been sleeping.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—God's guiding providence.—Saul, the qualities in him which fitted him to be king.—The sacrificial festival.—Another heart given to Saul (x. 9).—The election of Saul as king.—How he gained the position (chap. 11).—The possibilities in us.—The kingdom we have to gain.

## QUESTIONS.

REVIEW.—What request did the Israelites make of Samuel? Why did they want a king? Was the request granted? What warning did Samuel speak?

INTRODUCTION.—Who was the ruler over Israel at this time? Give the date? Where did Samuel live?

SUBJECT ENTERING UPON THE KINGDOM.

I. GOD'S GUIDANCE TO THE KINGDOM (vs. 15-21).—Who was Saul? (v. 1.) What was his appearance? (v. 2.) Relate the story of the way he was led to Samuel. (vs. 3-14.) How was Samuel guided to make choice of Saul? (vs. 15-17) Where did they meet? What did Samuel tell Saul about his father's asses? What did he hint about Saul's future? Meaning of "all the desire of Israel"? How did Saul receive this honour? Did this show a right spirit?

What are we taught here about God's guiding providence? How is this a comfort and help to us? Does God guide us by means of little things? What does Jesus say about the way to greater things? (Luke xvi. 10, Matt. xxv. 29.)

THE NOMINATION OF SAUL FOR KING (vs. 22-27).—To what place was Samuel going? What place did he give Saul at the feast? How many were there? In what place did Samuel talk over the affairs of the nation with him? What did Samuel do to Saul on his way home? (v. 1.) How was Saul prepared for his work? (x. 3-10.) What qualities had Saul that fitted him to be king?

Does God prepare us for whatever work he has for us to do? Has he placed each of us in the world for some special work? Are there great possibilities of good in each of us?

III. THE ELECTION OF SAUL (x. 17-27).—How was Saul chosen king of the people? In what place? Was the feeling unanimous for him?

IV. THE REAL INAUGURATION OF SAUL (xi. 1-15).—What enemy made an attack upon a city of Israel? Tell the story. How did Saul summon the people? What was the issue of the contest? What was the effect upon the people? (vs. 12-15.)

V. NEW TESTAMENT LIGHT.—Who is our rightful king? (Matt. iv. 10, vi. 9, 10, Luke x. 27; Rev. iv. 11; 1 Tim. i. 17.) How should we choose and acknowledge him as our king? (John xii. 26; Rev. iii. 20; xxii. 14.) To what kingdom are we called? (Rev. i. 6, iii. 21; v. 9, 10; Luke xxii. 29, 30.) How are we prepared for it? (Heb. xii. 20, 21; John xvi. 13, Rom. viii. 14; Heb. x. 15, 16.)

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. God's guiding providence is over all.

II. The smallest things rightly used may lead to the largest issues. Saul sought for stray asses and found a kingdom.

III. There is scarcely a limit to the possibilities of our lives.

IV. If God has work for us to do his Spirit will prepare us for it.

V. The proof of our election to a position is our capacity to fill it.

VI. God has called us to be kings.

VII. We become kings by accepting God as the King of kings.—*Peloubet.*

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