

OUR NELL.

CHAPTER XIV.

Nell went about her work next day in her usual brisk and energetic fashion, but in a mode somewhat more subdued than usual. Her grief at Derwent's departure was of a kind to soften rather than to embitter the spirit. There was in it no sting of disappointment. Gratitude, loyalty, affection, she had given him, but she had expected nothing in return beyond the cordial friendliness he had always shown towards her. Her mind had never entertained the idea of love-making between Derwent and herself; she had fully recognised the fact that her intercourse with him would soon come to an end. And now he was gone, and she would always be glad and proud she had known him. Nell, unapt at self-analysis, did not seek for an explanation of the heart-aches she had felt lately, and was far from suspecting that jealousy had been concerned in them; nor was she conscious how large a share of her thoughts and feelings had of late been engrossed by Derwent.

If the restlessness of the day before had departed from Nell's spirit, it had apparently taken possession of Carry's. Had Nell been less absorbed by her own feelings, she would probably have noticed that her sister's face was pale, and that her smile seemed like a weary hiding of some secret grief. She wandered about aimlessly, scarcely heeding what was passing, until even her mother was irritated, and spoke sharply to her. Carry's power of endurance, which had been strained to its utmost limit, gave way under the new burden, slight as it was. She broke down and sobbed hysterically. Mrs. Masters, full of self-reproach, soothed her tenderly, while marvelling much that such a trifle could so disturb her. The tears were a relief, and the love was comforting, and Carry appeared more like herself when the little episode was over.

After tea she said to Nell, who came into the parlour with her hat on—

"I want to go down the fields to the brook, Nell. You'll go with me, won't you?"

"Why, Carry," answered Nell, who was standing at the table with her back to her sister, "don't you know I'm just starting to Firley?"

Carry turned pale—whether from the shock of disappointment, or the keenness of relief, she herself could not have told. With an effort she spoke again.

"Put it off till to-morrow, Nell; and come with me to-night."

"Why, you unreasonable girl, how can I?" answered Nell, laughing. "I can't give it up; and I don't know that I should if I could, to give way to a whim. If you want a walk, come with me."

"It's too far."

"Well, come part of the way; and bring Bob with you for company back."

Carry did not reply; but as Nell was going out at the door, she ran to her, and catching her round the waist, said in an excited way—

"Nell, Nell, do go with me!"

"Don't be such a goose, Carry! what has got into you to-day?" cried Nell impatiently, and then added, "Go on with those fine crochet roses for your antimacassar, and I'll go with you to-morrow night."

In another moment she was gone, and Carry heard her quick step outside. Her whole frame quivered with excitement.

"I can't be blamed now"—and the thought was exultant—"I've tried my best, and she would not come."

Nell's errand accomplished, she set her face homewards, choosing a route which, though indirect, lay through the fields, and was pleasanter than the dusty high-road. Her spirit, full of gentle gladness, felt attuned to the solitude, the air, and the evening light. At a distance of some three or four fields from the farm, the path crossed that which formed the nearest route between the village of Hazlewood and Dubsley Station. Here the path ran under a high hedge,

As Nell came up to the stile, which divided her from it, the sound of voices came to her ears from the other side of the hedge. Her heart leapt within her; the voices were those of Carry and Mr. Derwent. One moment of amazed bewilderment, and she had crossed the stile. She stood transfixed. Carry her white face drawn, was standing, motionless and speechless, gazing at Derwent with piteous tear-filled eyes. He, bending over her, had his arm round her waist.

"Darling," he murmured, "I must go. We must say good-bye. Give me one kiss."

Nell, with a desperate effort, threw off the night-mare horror which had rooted her to the ground.

At the sound of her movement, they started apart, and saw her. For a moment the three gazed at each other. Not a word was spoken. Under the pitiless scorn of Nell's glance, Carry quailed like a reed before the wind. Speechless Nell confronted them, speechless left them.

Relieved from the spell of her eyes, with a wild cry Carry threw herself on the ground; her hands clutched the grass convulsively, her slight frame was torn with the passion of her sobs. Between her sobs she wailed, brokenly—

"They have found me out! they'll never forgive me! Father and Nell will never forgive me. I've been deceiving them, and they'll never forgive me! Oh! I cannot go home—I cannot go home! They will kill me with their scorn!"

Derwent, amazed and agast, knelt at her side.

"Nonsense, Carry! nonsense, my darling!" he said, in a soothing tone. "You are excited; you haven't done anything wrong. Don't talk so wildly!" He sought to take her hand.

"No, no, no!" she cried; "It is you that have done it! Oh, let me die! I cannot go home—I cannot go home!"

Derwent drew a great breath, and threw off his cap; he felt suffocated. What was he to do! The sight of Carry's misery wrung his heart. What a sensitive child it was! He cursed his foolish folly that had brought this upon her.

He could not endure the thought of her encountering hard words and looks, without a soul to pity and comfort her. He pressed Carry's shoulder.

"Get up, darling," and there was both tenderness and authority in his tone; "you shall not go home, you shall come with me."

Will, judgment, even thought, were impossible to the girl; quivering in every nerve from the strain of emotion, the sudden relief well-nigh turned her brain. She was as one to whom the gates of paradise are opened. Fear and anguish were swallowed up in bewildering joy. Scorn and anger could no longer touch her, she was to be married to the man she loved!

Derwent helped her up with firm hands, he put on her hat for her, gave her stricken face one pitiful kiss, and then, with his arm round her waist, he hurried her on to the station. Carry was like a dead weight on his arm, but they must reach it in time for the train.

(To be continued)

THE EPIPHANY.

In ancient times the Epiphany was called "The Day of the Holy Lights," or "The Manifestation of God." The principal design of the Church in commemorating this event is to express attitude to God for manifesting the Gospel to the Gentile world. This manifestation placed all the nations of the earth on an equal footing of privilege and blessings with the Jews, who had been for so long a period His chosen people. There is special significance, therefore, in the observance of this season. It proclaims from age to age the great fact that the

Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to redeem and save the whole human race; and when he commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, He would have it understood that His Kingdom was to extend to all lands and embrace all people. How completely this idea silences once and forever all objections which are so freely and thoughtlessly made against the cause of missions. If there be human beings anywhere on the face of the earth to whom the Gospel is unknown, then is it the duty of the Church of Christ to carry the glad tidings of salvation to them without delay.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

Our Church deems this event of sufficient importance to justify a special service for its observance. A little thought will show us the wisdom of it. It was a precept of the Mosaic law that every first-born son should be holy unto the Lord—to attend the services of the Temple or Tabernacle, or to be redeemed with an offering of money or sacrifice. The mother also was required, after a given time, to present a lamb, if she was able, or if very poor, a couple of pigeons. Now, all these requirements of the Jewish law were exactly fulfilled in the case of Jesus and His mother. And thus it was that all righteousness was fulfilled. It was all-important that the man Christ Jesus should, as touching the law, be blameless. Consequently He fulfilled it perfectly, both in letter and spirit. In other words, He met and satisfied the law and made it honourable. In this respect, therefore, the Jews are without excuse in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah that was to come. In thus presenting the Lord Jesus to the world, the Church continues to be a keeper and a witness of the truth. She preserves in the minds of her children the Old Dispensation, while it sets forth all the time the glories and blessings of the new Dispensation.

GOOD OPPORTUNITIES.

LIFE is full of important events and constant changes. All this has its advantages and its disadvantages. Among the advantages may be named the almost endless variety which is given to our everyday life. But for these events and changes the lives of most people would become monotonous and tame to the last degree. As it is, every day brings something of variety, something new. We literally know not what a day may bring forth. But the greater advantage is to be found in the circumstance that these events and changes afford good opportunities for improvement. For instance, a birthday is an event carefully remembered and celebrated in many families. This is well. It awakens kind thoughts, stimulates our best affections, and leads to many a generous word and deed. It also affords an opportunity for important changes and a new departure in life. The New Year is another event full of interest and significance. This also suggests a profitable and practical review of the past and a careful forecasting of the future. The New Year not only marks the rapid passing of time, but it brings the beginning and the end of the year very closely together. This is a great help in reviewing the past and in considering the future. Then there are all our civil and ecclesiastical events which we are accustomed to commemorate. In their place and way they are very useful, for they afford good starting points for new and better courses of life. To the Christian these occasions are of great advantage. They fill the mind with new thoughts and the heart with higher aspirations. Life is no longer a humdrum thing, but an intense reality. What opportunities are offered! What ends may be attained! And how full of inspiration is everything within and around us!

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Children's Department.

LITTLE THINGS.

Little thorns are sharpest,
Little cares fall deep,
Little acts will often
Cause our love to sleep.

Little things we live by,
Little things we say,
Little things not seldom
Steal our peace away.

Little things lie closest,
Little things are light;
Little things can sometimes
Turn our day to night.

Little things can fly far,
Little things can pain,
Little things take longest
To gather up again.

Little things distress us,
Little things annoy,
Little things my blessing
And may give us joy.

THE BABY'S SERMON.

The children had been in their mamma's room, after breakfast, Sunday morning, learning their text; and when they had it perfectly, and were going down stairs again for a run in the garden, while nurse was busy, Nannie and Frank fell to disputing. And what do you think it was about? Why, who should carry the great rubber ball down stairs.

Nannie wanted it because she thought of it first, and Frank wanted it because he was the oldest. "You're a mean, selfish boy," said Nannie.

"You're a pig," said Frank.

"I'll just tell papa what a horrid boy you are," said Nannie.

"And I'll tell mamma I wish she'd sell you to somebody. I don't want such a sister," answered Frank.

So these naughty children went on from bad to worse, saying all sorts of unkind and unpleasant things to one another—so very unkind that they were ashamed enough whenever they remembered them afterward.

At this time Baby Ben was coming down stairs behind them. Slowly, one foot at a time holding fast to the banister with both fat small hands, the little man made his way, and wider and wider opened his big blue eyes, as he heard the angry words.

The children stopped at the foot of the stairs to finish their quarrel. Frank was trying very hard to take the ball away from Nannie, and she had got as far as pulling his hair, the naughty girl, when the baby stopped on the lowest stair, and preached his sermon to them.

"Fickle children," said he, "love one another." That was every word he said. It was the text the children had been learning in their mother's room such a short time before. Nannie dropped her hands, her face flushed, and she turned half away from Baby Ben, and nobody said anything for a moment.

"Here, Frank," said Nannie at last, holding out the ball, "you may have it, I'm going to be good."

"So am I," said Frank. "You shall have the first toss, Nannie. I'm—I'm real sorry I was so cross."

So the two went off to the garden hand in hand, ashamed enough of having been so naughty, while the baby curled himself up in papa's big chair, and went fast asleep.

THE LIBELOUS PLACARD.

In the small town of Kustrin, not far from the capital, lived an old, disabled soldier. He had served during