

The Inglenook.

Bell's Story.

BY ANNA ROSS
How Bell Learned to be Happy.

Perhaps you are thinking that Bell's troubles are over, but if so you are sadly mistaken. It is true, there had been real progress, but there were difficulties yet that looked just as grim as any of those left behind. Bell could not find out how to be good. When she wanted to be thankful, her heart was as dry as a stick; when she wanted to pray, she found her very soul would cleave to the dust; and when she wanted to be patient and gentle, she found her crooked temper and opinion of herself about as unchristlike as they could well be. To be fighting and mostly to get beaten, is very discouraging work. However, the good Master gave her many a nelp by the way, leading mind and heart out toward the sweet way of peace. Pretty soon after this conflict really began she got a great help from that verse, "Without me ye can do nothing." She was at this time spinning on the big wheel over in the old house. The house was empty and quiet, and such a nice place in which to spin and think! "Without me ye can do nothing." So much comfort did she see in these words that, while drawing out the long threads, she was at the same time weaving her thoughts into a little letter which she would have liked so much to put into the young Christian's corner of some good newspaper, that others who were troubled as she was might get the comfort too. "I can do nothing without him, and he knows it,"—this was the heart of the comfort. It was a foretaste of the liberty there is in Christ, but it soon faded away.

Several years after this she was walking alone along a quiet road leading to the Bush Farm, where Minnie and she took turns in keeping house for the brothers. She was thinking sadly of the sort of Christian she was at home, and saw that herself occupied too high a place in everything. But how to get herself down she could not tell. She despised the sort of sins she was seeing in her own heart and life. Yet there they were, and what could she do? The snow was under her feet and the gray winter sky overhead as she was pondering these things in her heart. It was not long after the storing away of the Epistle to the Colossians, so a word was lying all ready in memory, only needing to be "brought to remembrance" by the "Comforter." Brightly the word of comfort came: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Strange as it may seem, it was the first part of the verse, rather than the second, that was the main resting place: "Ye are dead." "I am dead, yes, just dead, as far as goodness is concerned, and God knows it, and is not surprised; and my life is in him, all in him."

Another time she had been taking the Epistle to the Laodiceans home to herself and seeking to follow the counsel Christ himself gives to that lukewarm church—to buy of him gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, and eye salve. She had been reminding him of this, his own counsel, and asking that he would sell to her on his own published terms, "without money and without price," these things that all lukewarm Christians stand in need of. "Though there was little life or enjoyment in the exercise,

and much lukewarmness and miserable worldliness even in the time of prayer, she felt that in this she had an argument with the Lord—an argument that took hold upon his faithfulness or business honor; and this was strong ground. Days and weeks passed with little or no change as to the listless fighting and constant defeat. But one day she came across this one of the "better promises" which distinguish the new covenant: "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their heart." This was just what she needed, she saw in a moment, and He was to do it. "Do it Lord; do it thyself, as thou hast said." This with a heart-leap was her response to the promise, and for some days or weeks great peace and power were enjoyed. But the power seemed to die, and the reigning peace faded away with it. Each of these times there was something dimly seen and temporarily grasped by faith. But the knowledge was not clear enough, and it would fade, and then faith would falter and the ground gained would seem quite lost. But it was not quite lost. The careful Master was taking the stupid little scholar over the same lesson again and again, with the patient determination that she should go over and over it until it should be learned.

In the year 1869, after many hopes and fears and prayers, it was decided that Bell should be sent to a good school in Hamilton. Here she enjoyed her studies and school-life very much, and yet the old battle had to go on hotter and hotter. On one occasion, when during a religious awakening a good many of her schoolmates were beginning to "inquire the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward," her deep discouragement because of the hardness of the road came out in a way she had not expected. Instead of being overjoyed as one and another declared herself to be on the Lord's side, she was conscious that anxiety and pitiful sympathy were her uppermost feelings. She could scarcely be glad, for her inmost heart misgave her that they would never be able to hold on. True, there was abundant cause for walking softly in the matter, but had she forgotten the verse, "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?" Yes, to a large extent she had forgotten it, both for herself and for others. But it just had to be made plainer and plainer that she could not go this "warfare at her own charges."

So completely had the Bible won its place in her daily course that even the pressure of school work seldom interfered with the morning hour in the lonely corner she had taken up for her closet. But this same hour was the most discouraging part of the day's duties. It seemed as though every worldly thing would press for consideration on just then, and her strength of will was powerless to prevent. The worst was, the will seemed to be on the wrong side and to refuse to act, though she hated herself for the things she was allowing. Truly the warfare of the seventh of Romans was her portion then: "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

In Bell's third year at school she became a teacher. The early Sabbath morning hour had been taken by a few of the more serious girls for a prayer meeting of their own. When a student, Bell had a good deal en-

joyed taking part in these. But of course when she became a teacher she could not attend them any more, as that meeting was kept up by and for the students alone. Still, she felt like being among them, one way or another. Her plan was to rise in good time, and to seek to enjoy it in her own room while they were holding the meeting in the room below. But it was a grief of heart to her that this precious hour was usually her very driest time. One Sabbath morning, while kneeling at her bedside with her Bible before her, seeking to read and pray, and worried with the wandering thoughts that would come, and he stupid earthly soul that would cleave to the dust and would not rise up, she turned her eyes from the book, clasped her hands and looked up in utter discouragement, with the words upon her lips, "Well, I am utterly helpless." As the words were spoken a view of the truth of them, such as she never had had before, was given her, and up they came again, joyfully this time: "Of course I am utterly helpless; Lord, be thou my helper." Then the abundance the infinite abundance, of righteousness and strength and all spiritual blessings in him! Truly she could that day enter into Paul's experience: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. When I am weak, then am I strong."

The glad thing is, that the lesson learned that day has not faded as the others did. Not that it is always remembered as it should be, nor that the two sides are always doubly prominent as they were that day. But the good Master fairly placed two ideas side by side that day, and made them enter into her very soul and sit in the right relation, the one to the other—the utterness of the helplessness and infinitude of the fullness.

At the beginning it was only forgiveness of sins and acceptance in Christ that she pleaded for. Once having that, she was going to be such an earnest shining Christian, with only a little help in the difficult places. For several years she had been experiencing that "only a little help" was never going to do; she needed a great deal of help. But the discouraging thing had been that, though she needed much she could get so little. But now she had distinctly come to this point, that the whole of the life and strength for this work must come from him. She had none—no, not any. Once this point was reached, then there was abundance—yes, abundance.

For weeks, and even months, the very vividness of the lesson continued. As time gradually did wear away the vividness, still the great truths were left, and they have made it a different thing to follow Christ. Sometimes one gets faint, and sometimes the other, and when that is the case with either, mischief is sure to come of it. But He who is leading and teaching has wonderful ways of bringing them out bright again, and then the songs come as before. Is it not a simple lesson? Oh, may he lead others by means of this simple story!

Christ's school is a most wonderful school. When he has taught one lesson that seems so good you cannot think that he has anything beyond it, he by and by lets you see that that is only a preparation for something further and brighter. And when that too is learned, there is more and more opening up before you to be lived into and learned, and only so as to be ready for still another step up. Paul was an earnest scholar and surely attained to the highest class, and yet how he compares what he has learned with what he has yet to learn!—"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward