

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TO-DAY.
BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NELL," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.—(Continued.)

THE idea of giving up their little income to the Denstons, and of separating, and of earning their living as governesses, was that which appeared most satisfactory and soothing to Grace's mind. Something thorough, something involving prodigious sacrifice, was what her feeling craved. But she knew well enough that the idea was a wild one. She was absolutely certain that Philip Denston would scold it, as, indeed would any man not absolutely base. In the case of his sister, a door was open; that Hester should devote herself to her appeared now most just and right, and marvellous did the way appear by which Hester had been led to do so. Grace felt it now unfortunate that she had thrown her influence in any degree on the side of a slackening of that devotion, and so nervously anxious was she to undo anything she might have done in that way, that she took the earliest opportunity to renew confidential talk with her sister, and to say that though she had repeated Mr. Denston's remarks, she herself must not be understood to coincide with them, and that for her part she had full sympathy with Hester's self-sacrificing attachment, and honoured her for it, and would never say one discouraging word.

Hester listened with some amazement, for she had clearly perceived that Grace had quite failed to sympathise in the past; and she wondered as to the meaning of the change. But she would no longer allow herself to distrust Grace in any way, for having been mistaken in one direction, she felt the possibility of mistakes elsewhere. She kissed her sister tenderly, but did not confide to her the experiences of her relation with Miss Denston, for the new habit of confidence towards her, though sweet, was still novel and strange.

Poor Grace felt the kiss which expressed the trust, inexpressible by Hester otherwise, almost painful, for she was conscious of still holding communications in reserve. She could not at present see how her discovery was to bear in the matter of Philip Denston. She feared its effect on Hester. If she, Grace, were so agitated by it, how much more so would Hester be! Had not Hester enough to bear already in seeing Mr. Denston ill, and in trouble, without having the torture added of knowing the source of it? And if Hester did not love, and Mr. Denston did, would not Hester be drawn into responding through the force of that thirst to atone which she was experiencing? And even were Hester thus to seek to atone, would it be, after all, an atonement? Perhaps Philip Denston, when he came to know, would repulse an affection offered him by her father's daughter; and, in any case, marriage was out of the question, for Hester could give him nothing but herself, and Philip's future was very black. It was understood that his employers valued him, and were ready to wait some time for his recovery, and had been generous, also, in giving him a present to defray the expenses of his illness; but what was all that in the face of his long-continued weakness, the dependence of his sister upon him, and the small salary he received for his work, even should he be able to return to it.

All this, indeed, would, it occurred to Grace, in thinking over the matter, probably account for the contradictions in Denston's manner which had repelled her. Her heart swelled with painful pity. How hopeless his attachment must appear to him! She had made an absurd mistake in supposing for a moment that he could intend to reveal his feelings. It would account also for his evident avoidance of them all lately. Since the day of the expedition, he had dropped the habit of coming in constantly, which had apparently excited little notice in the family, for her mother, with whom he had been so great a favourite, had been absorbed in the feelings connected with her visit to the asylum. Hester must surely have noticed it, but then she could not attribute it to indifference towards herself, since it was during this very period that he had showed how much of his interest she possessed. Grace brooded over all these facts and conjectures, and got no nearer to peace of mind as the days passed. And Waterhouse was the only one who noticed her changing looks.

How long this condition of things might have lasted cannot be told, for one morning, when Grace and her mother went down to breakfast, they found a letter awaiting them which fell like a thunderbolt in quiet air. It came from the doctor at the head of the asylum of which Mr. Fleetwood was an inmate, and ran as follows:

"DEAR MADAM,—You will not, I apprehend, after my conversation with you concerning your husband, on your last visit, be surprised to hear that a change has taken place in his condition. It has been gradual, and I have thought it wise to wait till well assured concerning it before communicating with you. He has now become perfectly sensible of his position here, and deprecates incessantly his separation from you. At the same time I must not conceal from you that his strength is falling rapidly. Under these circumstances, I should advise his removal home, which has become very strongly desired by himself. There can be no possible danger attendant upon it, and if delayed longer may become impossible, owing to the increasing weakness. I would not recommend a visit from you till you can arrange to take him away with you, as I should deprecate the agitation in his present state. Awaiting your decision of a date on which his removal could be accomplished, I am, yours truly,
EDWIN POYNTER."

On reading this letter, Grace was thrown into a state of extreme agitation. She was unfitted by her previous suffering to sustain further shock, and the consciousness of having to rally her forces to meet new emergency had an overwhelming instead of a rousing effect, such as would, in her ordinary condition, have been the case. She calculated on having to sustain her mother, as she had so often had to do before, but when she turned towards her a white terror-stricken face, which she in vain endeavoured to compose, she found that Mrs. Norris met it by a look inspired and brave, and in all that ensued it became evident that the two had changed places.

Some moments passed without further speech than that which passed from eye to eye. Grace felt herself reanimated by the sight of her mother's face. She felt that her mother would act, and that she need only bear. She would not be asked to do the impossible, for at that moment to act with energy and force seemed to her impossible.

"Well, it has come," were her mother's first words, and her face wore a look of solemn triumph. "I knew it would come."

"Mother," said Grace, fearing for her a sudden reaction, "he must be very ill."

"My dear, I knew last time I saw him that he was going to die; but do you think that distresses me, when God has given him back to me? I have known a worse separation than death."

Grace made no reply in words, for at that moment Hester came into the room, and Kitty behind her. But as she passed her mother in order to take her seat at the head of the table she caught her hand and pressed it. When the others were served Grace poured out a cup of tea for herself, and drank it, but she could eat nothing. She watched her mother opposite, and marvelled to see her look so calm and firm.

Grace's brain was in a feverish tumult, running hither and thither over arrangements and consequences, and filled with one predominating anxiety as to how her sisters were to be told, and what would be the effect upon them. As Grace looked upon them, sitting unsuspectingly on each side of her, she realised with a force she had never done before that the concealment had been unnatural and wrong. Did not her mother feel with her a sense of humiliation in the presence of these two who had been barred out from what they must now be initiated into, with a strange and violent shock, but which might and ought to have been a bond drawing them all together, during the years that were passed, into closer and more sacred union? But Grace could not find it in her heart to blame her mother now, as she sat before her, with that wonderful look on her face. After breakfast Mrs. Norris, as usual, read prayers.

"Surely," thought Grace, "the children will see the tears that she has to brush away, and will hear the strange thrill in her voice."

"No one, however, appeared to notice that there was anything unusual going on. Hester and Kitty repaired to lessons, and Grace and her mother were alone again.

"Mother," said Grace at once, "are you not going to tell the children?"

"That may be left for the present," said Mrs. Norris; "let us make our arrangements. In the first place of course, we shall have to send Mr. Waterhouse away."

The same necessity had almost at first occurred to Grace's mind. She found it even more distasteful now that it began to be pressed home.

"That would be a great pity," she said doubtfully; "the money would be very useful."

"Oh, there can be no question about it, my dear; we could not possibly do with him, and you know we shall have the money hitherto paid to Dr. Poynter."

"But, mother, it would seem very sudden to Mr. Waterhouse. Should you tell him the reason? We ought, you know, to give him notice."

"I think I can manage it. I must do so, however. He is, you know, very obliging, and will have all the feelings of a gentleman. I shall, I think, tell him we want the room for a visitor. I must go and see him at once. Yes, that is the first thing to be done."

Further talk followed as to ways and means. As soon as Mr. Waterhouse had breakfasted, Mrs. Norris repaired thither, and Grace set about her morning duties. The prospect before them grew more and more black and strange in her eyes. How hard to receive this father, unknown and unesteemed, with due love and rejoicing! Nay, how hard to keep down fear and distrust. Their household life was to be turned upside down, and nothing would remain the same. And, if her mother were right, there was the shadow of the awful unknown angel of death hanging over all. She went about her work *distracted* and pale, making no effort to rise above the trouble of her spirits.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Norris was not finding such smooth sailing as she expected. Waterhouse had always regarded his landlady with some awe. Her passionless dignity was in the habit of freezing his impetuous speech at its source. But his consternation, when at last she succeeded, with some difficulty, in making him comprehend her errand, swept away such slight embarrassments, and he poured forth such a torrent of indignant amazement and question that she found her little schemes of polite evasion and apology altogether inadequate, and finally retired with a sense of failure, to talk the matter over with Grace, to whom she expressed her fears that Mr. Waterhouse did not really understand that he was to go immediately, though she had done her best to express herself clearly. Seeing that her mother was sadly worried by the affair and that she looked for some such reply, Grace promised to try herself to supplement her mother's efforts, though, she reflected, that there was little chance that in any case she would have escaped a discussion of the matter. The morning and afternoon passed, and Grace, feeling totally unfit for the strain upon her nerves, was careful to keep out of Waterhouse's way, knowing that at dinner-time an interview was unavoidable.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. WATERHOUSE OFFENDS.

WHEN Grace reached the door of Waterhouse's room she was trembling. Her nervousness was due, however, more to the anticipation of the scene with Hester that evening than of the dread of having to cope with Waterhouse's vehemence. The former anticipation had been with her all day, for though her mother had said nothing on the subject, she could hardly suppose it possible that the communication would be longer delayed. She felt she ought to let her mother know that Hester was already aware of some part of the truth, but a certain extraordinary paralysis seemed that day to have overtaken her faculties, usually so bright and alert, and she had not obeyed this dictate of her reason. When she passed the threshold, however, the impulsive accost she expected did not greet her ears. At first she did not lift her eyes, but, surprised by the silence, she at last raised them. Waterhouse was standing by the mantelpiece regarding her, but in his look there was no indignation. On the contrary, an unmistakable air of dejection hung about him. He looked thoroughly miserable, and a neglected person added to the effect. He had not changed his morning coat, and his hair was tumbled up in confusion. Grace, who had put herself on the defence for this interview, expecting to be greeted by a renewal of such speeches as her mother had reported, was instantaneously disarmed, and felt a sensation of pity spring up in her breast, notwithstanding that there was scarcely room there to admit a new emotion. She recollected that Mr. Waterhouse had no family, nor near friends to whom to betake himself, and that he had often complained of the still more

solitary life he had led before he came to them. However, when Waterhouse had continued to regard her with a doleful face, and she caught herself indulging in reflections which she knew were conveying an equally doleful expression to her own, a ludicrous aspect of the situation struck her, and she had much ado to restrain a laugh, which would probably have resulted in hysterics. The situation was prolonged eventually so long that she felt compelled to break the silence, as Waterhouse evidently did not intend to do so. She made some trivial remark, to which she got no reply. At last, however, Waterhouse said, in a melancholy tone, as unlike his ordinary ones as could well be—

"Are you feeling any better this evening?" Grace looked up with a start, the address was so contrary to what she expected.

"Why do you ask that? I have never been ill," she replied.

"Why do you deceive me?" asked Waterhouse, with a momentary return to his old impatience; "do you think I do not know why you are turning me out?"

"I think you must be under some delusion about it."

"You are mistaken; I know only too well; but it did not strike me till after your mother was gone this morning. Why did she not tell me candidly the truth about it? If it was to spare my feelings, she made a great mistake."

"What, then, do you take to be the reason, Mr. Waterhouse?"

"Do you think I am blind, that I cannot see how miserably pale and ill you have been getting? But, Miss Norris," he continued, in a deep pleading tone, "won't you let me get a servant for myself? Why should you work as you do, when I have plenty of money?"

"Oh, Mr. Waterhouse," exclaimed Grace, really moved by his kindness, "you are very good, but you are quite wrong; I am not ill in the least."

Waterhouse instantaneously changed from dejection to fury.

"Then what is the reason?" he exclaimed, loudly, "Why am I to go?"

"That, I am sorry to say, I cannot tell you," replied Grace, taking her stand firmly, perceiving that she must now face the brunt of the exposed storm.

"Oh, but I must insist upon knowing it."

"That you cannot do, Mr. Waterhouse."

"Yes, I can. I have a right. I will not be kicked out like a dog, without knowing why. If I chose, I could insist upon notice being given me."

"Yes, but, being a gentleman, and a kind one too, you will not do that when there are women in the question."

"But, come, do you think I have deserved it?"

"That you have not indeed," Grace could not help saying.

"Good gracious! how can human beings treat each other like this? To live under the same roof with one in some sort of friendly relationship for six months, and then turn one adrift without so much as a reason! I suppose I shall learn what human nature is by-and-by."

"We are very sorry indeed," began Grace, rather falteringly.

"Why, Miss Norris," he continued, "I shall be wretched. I haven't anywhere to go. I never knew a day's happiness since my father died, till I came here. I am the sort of man that can't live without some one to care for, and I may say that I care for you all."

This pleading was harder to bear than the storming. Grace stood looking at him for a moment, and then, without a moment's warning of what was coming, she felt herself beginning to cry, a thing that could never have happened to her at any other point in her life. Her overstrung nerves in this way took their revenge. But by no other means, however well calculated, could she have better slipped through the difficult position. Since she could not have given him the reason he demanded, and as subterfuge was quite foreign to her, this utter break down was more effective than a dignified self-possession. In a moment it changed the current of Waterhouse's feelings from self-commission to self-forgetting anxiety. He perceived that there was something seriously the matter, and that by his persistence he had been aggravating Grace's troubles. When he saw her begin to cry he could not speak, and he dared not touch her, though a mighty impulse seized him to do so. He threw up his hands with a gesture of desperation very eloquent, but Grace, whose face was buried in her handkerchief, did not see it. Her emotion was soon mastered, for the tears were accompanied by a horror of the extraordinary weakness. She said, as calmly as possible, as soon as she could speak—

"Mr. Waterhouse, I am very sorry you are going. We are all very sorry. I hope you will believe this, and that it is only because we are absolutely obliged that we ask you to go."

Waterhouse made no reply to this, except by muttering, "I am a brute!" and walking off to the window. He turned round again, however, by-and-by, to say—

"Do what you like with me. I'll go to-morrow, if you like. Please forgive me, and I'll not tease you with another question."

"That is very good of you," said Grace, earnestly.

And she was pleased to be able to take to her mother so good an account of Waterhouse's behaviour. She did not, however, describe to her the means by which the success had been brought about.

The evening had come, and the day seemed a very long one, but it had not yet brought forth all it held in store for the Norries. About eight o'clock, Grace, who had gone into her bedroom after waiting upon Mr. Waterhouse, and who happened to be looking out of the window in a dreary reverie, saw a brougham drive down the street. She gave it only a mechanical attention, until she perceived, to her intense surprise, that it was stopping at their own door. The carriage door opened, and a gentleman got out, whom she recognized immediately to be Dr. Poynter. There was apparently some one else inside the carriage, for he put his head in for a moment at the window before turning to mount the steps. Grace concluded that it would be best for her to open the door, and take the visitor into the back dining-room. Who could tell what he was come to announce? But her mother had apparently also seen the arrival, and was beforehand with her; for Grace ran down stairs to find the front door open, and her mother half-way down the steps into the street. Dr. Poynter turned, and followed her more leisurely, but Mrs. Norris was already inside the carriage before he reached her. Grace stood in the hall, looking on in astonishment at her mother's proceeding.

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

THIRD QUARTER.

WARNING TO JUDAS AND PETER.

LESSON VIII., August 22nd, John xiii. 21-35; memory verses 30-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.—1 Cor. x. 12.

TIME.—Thursday evening, April 6, A.D. 30. The same time as the last lesson.

PLACE.—An upper room in Jerusalem.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—With vs. 21-26,—Matt. xxvi. 21-25; Mark xiv. 18-21, Luke xxii. 21-23. With vs. 30-38,—Matt. xxvi. 30-35; Mark xiv. 26-31, Luke xxii. 31-38.

INTRODUCTION.—After the washing of the disciples' feet Jesus reclines again at the table, and the Passover supper continues, while Jesus converses with his disciples.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—21. *Jesus troubled in spirit*: Indignation and grief that one for whom he had done so much should be so wicked and lose his soul,—a type of many others. 22. *Looked one on another*: and asked, "Lord is it I?" Luke xxii. 23, Matt. xxvi. 22. Each one thought of himself, not his neighbours. 23. *Whom Jesus loved*. John himself. 26. *To whom I shall give a sop*: some of the unleavened bread dipped in a sauce of bitter herbs. The head of the table was accustomed to give this to all, so John only knew what this giving the sop to Judas at this moment meant. 31. *Now is the Son of man glorified*: his death, by which he was to have the glory of redeeming the world was to be the next morning, and he would soon be with the Father, on his throne in heaven. 33. *Whither I go ye cannot come*: they must stay in the world a little longer to do their work. But in time he would take them to himself, v. 31 (xiv. 3). 36. *Thou shalt follow me afterwards*: he had not only went to Jesus, but by way of the cross. 38. See the fulfilment in John xviii. 16-27.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Judas.—Why he betrayed Christ.—The disciple whom Jesus loved.—Jesus troubled in spirit.—The Son of man glorified.—The new commandment.—Peter's denial.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTION.—When and where was our last lesson? How is the present lesson connected with it?

SUBJECT: TWO FAILURES.

I. THE TRAITOR.—A TOTAL FAILURE (vs. 21-30).—Why was Jesus troubled in spirit? Which one of the disciples was a traitor? What had Jesus done for him that should have made him good? If people become bad now, must it be against many good influences? What are some of them? How did the disciples receive the announcement of Jesus? (v. 22, Matt. xxvi. 22) How did Jesus point out to John who it was? Who entered into Judas after this? What does this mean? What were the effects?

Who is mentioned in striking contrast with Judas? (v. 23.) In what way may we be disciples whom Jesus loves? With what spirit are such persons filled? (John xvi. 7, 13.)

How could Judas become so bad under such influences? Do such things occur now? What motives led Judas to betray Jesus. Did his character suddenly become bad, or was it a gradual development?

II. THE NEW COMMANDMENT (vs. 31-35).—How was the Son of man to be glorified? What commandment did Jesus give his disciples? Why is it called a new commandment? Is it easy to obey? What things does it forbid? What things would it lead you to do? What mark distinguishes Christians from the world?

How was God glorified in Christ? Why did he call his disciples little children? Is love the only badge that marks Christians as different from the world? Would it be good to have them distinguished by dress or badges? Had there never before been a commandment to love one another? (Lev. xix. 18.)

III. THE IMPETUOUS DISCIPLE.—A PARTIAL FAILURE (vs. 36-38).—Where was Jesus going that his disciples could not follow him? (vs. 33, 36) Would they follow him there some time? (John xiv. 3) What did Peter think he could do? (v. 3) How could he be so mistaken about himself? What did Jesus say to him? When did he do as Jesus said? (John xviii. 1-27.) Did Peter repeat his act? Did Judas' act prove that he was not a Christian? Did Peter's prove that he was not? What was the difference? Who alone can keep us from falling?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. The sins of God's professed people bring sorrow to his heart.

II. Men may grow bad under the best influences.

III. It is blessed to be a disciple whom Jesus loves.

IV. We may be such, (1) by loving him; (2) by living near him; (3) by cherishing a lovely character.

V. We can put ourselves under the influences of Satan or of the Holy Spirit, and the choice will be followed by corresponding results and rewards.

VI. Love is the great law of the Christian life.

VII. True Christians sometimes fall, but they quickly repent and do deeds meet for repentance.

REVIEW EXERCISE.—(For the whole school in concert).—16. Who betrayed Jesus? ANS. Judas Iscariot. 17. Under whose influence did he put himself? ANS. Satan entered into him. 18. What is the new commandment? ANS. (Repeat v. 34) 19. What did Jesus foretell that Peter would do? ANS. Deny him three times before morning dawned. 20. What did Peter do when he had committed this sin? ANS. He went and wept bitterly.

THE congregation of James' church, New Glasgow, N. S., has decided to celebrate the centenary of their church in September. No other Presbyterian congregation in Nova Scotia, with the exception of the First Presbyterian church in Truro, has reached its centenary. In anticipation of this event, the congregation, we understand, are putting forth efforts to make it as interesting as possible. Suitable services will be held; addresses will be delivered, and papers read on subjects bearing more or less in connection with the early history, progress and present state of Presbyterianism, not in the county alone, but throughout the Maritime Provinces as well. We understand, also, that suitable tablets to the memory of Revs. Dr. McGregor and Dr. Roy, the first pastors of the congregation, will be unveiled on this occasion.