

ROCK OF AGES.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
Thoughtlessly the maiden sung,
Fell the words unconsciously
From her girlish, guileless tongue.
Sang as little children sing;
Sang as sing the birds in June;
Fell the words like light leaves down
On the current of the tune—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Felt her soul no heed to hide;
Sweet the song as song could be,
And she had no thought beside,
All the words unheedingly
Fell from lips untouched by care.
Dreaming not they each might be
On some other lips a prayer—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
"T was a woman sung them now—
Sung them slow and wearily,—
Wan hand on her aching brow.
Rose the song as storm-tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air;
Every note with sorrow stirred,
Every syllable a prayer—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
Life's grown aged sung the hymn,
Trustingly and tenderly;
Voice grown weak and eyes grown dim—
"Let me hide myself in Thee."
Trembling though the voice and low,
Ran the sweet strain peacefully
Like a river in its flow,
Sung as only they can sing
Who life's thorny paths have pressed;
Sung as only they can sing
Who behold the promised rest—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
Sang above a coffin lid;
Underneath all restfully,
All life's joy and sorrow hid.
Never more, O storm-tossed soul,
Never more from wind and tide,
Never more from billow's roll,
Wilt thou ever need to hide?
Could the sightless, sunken eyes,
Closed beneath the soft white hair;
Could the mute and stiffened lips
Move again in pleading prayer,
Still, aye still, the words would be—
"Let me hide myself in Thee."

VERY SELECT.

THE Highburns were a very select family; very select, indeed. They lived in an old-fashioned house because they did not wish a modern one. A cousin of Mrs. Highburn's great aunt came over in the *Mayflower*, and this fact was never lost sight of. Several generations back, money came into the family through mercantile trade. I believe the great grandfather was a merchant, and became very rich. His memory was tolerated, and his money thankfully received, because he lived so many years ago; but if Mr. Highburn himself had been a merchant, his wife would have considered that plebeian.

I remember very well a certain family where one brother was in the army, and the other a rich boot and shoe dealer. The former was welcomed by Mrs. Highburn; the other she entirely ignored. Tradespeople were at a discount; but the children of tradespeople, were they rich, and had no occupation, were considered eligible to first-class society.

Mrs. Highburn's house showed blue blood. She never had any modern pictures; none but the old masters, or copies of them, were tolerated, and never anything American. If Church and Bierstadt had lived ages ago, and been German or Italian, they would have been welcomed to immortality on Mrs. Highburn's walls. Her children were all educated abroad. She could not go

with them, so they were sent under the care of nurses and guides to get the refinement of Paris and the culture of Germany. Even England was too American to be highly appreciated. Mrs. Highburn rarely patronized American shops, but sent abroad for as many things as possible. She had very little taste; select people seldom have. She was moderately good to her servants, though she thought common food and common beds quite sufficient for them; but the gulf fixed between the two classes, served and serving, both made by Jehovah from the same common earth, was illimitable.

Mrs. Highburn's associates in the city could be counted on one's fingers; one or two historians, a college president, one clergyman, and a half dozen old families, who have never done anything in life but live on the money their great-grandfathers earned. Occasionally the governor was invited, but he was a politician and self-made man, and Mrs. Highburn had no affinity with the governor's wife because she was formerly a school teacher. Now, while certain things might be forgiven in a man, if a woman had ever earned her living she was tabooed for ever after.

Mrs. Highburn drew up her dainty garments from politics, and had no respect for men who attended primary meetings. The common herd must do that, and she unwittingly was living under and obeying the laws they made for her. She had no toleration for the so-called strong-minded. She ruled Mr. Highburn with a rod of iron, but she continually advocated submission on the part of woman. She believed in their intellectual inferiority, and openly said so.

She was a member of the church, but never went to see any one outside her circle. Even the clergyman—good man though he was—was greatly influenced by Mrs. Highburn's desires, simply because she was select. The little Highburns played with his children, and as this familiarity was scarcely allowable with any other family, this may have had its influence.

She was very harsh in her judgments, and had little forgiveness, and especially for her own sex. One wrong step was never forgotten. A blessed thing that the Son of Man was not like this kind. Failure of business men, and inability to pay debts, were sins not to be wiped out. The Highburns' income was certain, and what need was there for other men to be unwise, or, as she thought, dishonest?

By and by James and Annie Highburn came back from Europe; he a handsome fellow not over fond of books, because fonder of the students' balls in Paris in the Latin Quarter, the only amusements to which guides will not take respectable women, the Jardin Mabille being quite pure in comparison; she a pretty, winsome, convert-educated creature, who knew scarcely anything of life, and had no strength as a background for her charming gentleness.

It is such a mistake to suppose that these two graces should not be developed together. The redeeming of the world to all that is good, and lovely, and pure, needs the utmost strength of character in a woman, coupled with all the tenderness, and sweetness, and sympathy, which God has given her. We can never have too much of the latter, and never too much of the former, if rightly directed. While a woman should be suggestive of flowers, and music, and poetry, she should not less give you the feeling of perfect trust that she will be strong enough to stand for the right in whatever emergency God puts her. Intellectual development and the girding power of circumstances are essential to this strength. She cannot work well for humanity until she has studied life.

Of course a party was made for the young Highburns—not a large affair like those of a lovely lady across the street, who once a year invited all her elegant house could accommodate, not forgetting her dressmaker, milliner, and

grocer. Mrs. Highburn despised grocers, dentists, commercial travelers, and the like, and never went to parties across the street, because she said "who knows but one might meet one's own coachman at Mrs. Mayhew's." But Mrs. Mayhew is very cultivated, and loved the city over, but she is not select.

Mrs. Highburn realized that it would be proper for her son James to do something in life, but, of course, not for Annie. She was to do fancy-work till she was married, probably. A place in a bank was obtained for the stylish young Parisian, not especially congenial to his tastes, but a good position.

There came a time when, through God's permitting, it seemed necessary for Mrs. Highburn to learn that charity, and tenderness, and humility are Christian graces, and must be learned if we are to have any part in the things beyond. Misfortunes rarely come singly. In one week Annie Highburn had eloped with an ordinary music-teacher, good enough perhaps, but never in Mrs. Highburn's set, much less ever welcomed to her house; and James Highburn had become a forger to such an extent that the family estate nearly all went to liquidate the claims.

For months Mrs. Highburn saw no one. The blackness of darkness settled upon the home; pride was crushed, motherly affection blasted poverty approaching, and permanent disgrace. There is no rift in the sullen sky. There was little sympathy offered her, and little was wanted. Such natures have to settle things with their Maker.

The old homestead, with its broad lawn and grand old trees, was sold. Mr. Highburn found a place to earn a comfortable though rather a meagre support; Annie came back and settled with her young husband, who fortunately, was an industrious man, of good habits, who would have been glad to have married her honourably but for her mother's pride; and James, after his prison-life went down in dissipation. These things would have killed many women, but not Mrs. Highburn, who with her strength ought to have made a grand woman.

Sentiments not even now obsolete in good society ruined her. To have known that men and women take rank before the Omnipotent for what they are, and not for their condition in life, and that we should judge as God judges would have saved her a world of trouble. He is no respecter of persons.

HOW GOD FORGIVES SINS.

It seems as though the Lord had exhausted the resources of the language and the stories of natural imagery in the effort to set forth the fulness and completeness of his forgiveness of the penitent. What does God do with the sins of the Christian?

1. "Thou wilt cast all thy sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah vii. 19.) The stone cast into the deep ocean is quite safe from the danger of discovery. "Tell the people," said a thoughtful child, when he had listened to a sermon on these words from his father, "tell them to remember that sin is heavy, and will sink itself. They might think it light, and would float." Indeed, it will sink of its own weight. And God puts it not into the shallow brook where it may be hid here, or into the treacherous river which may uncover its bed, but He casts it into the depths of the sea where no search can find it.

2. "For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." (Isa. xxxviii. 17.) David, in his penitence, cried out, "Thou hast set mine iniquities before Thee, my secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." We see, at once, what a change forgiveness effects. Our sins are behind God now, instead of before Him. He is between us and our sins, instead of our sins being between us and Him. He thus hides us from our transgressions instead of our transgressions hiding us from Him.

3. "As far as the East is from the West so far hast Thou removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. ciii. 12.) Wonderful promise this! For who can tell how far the East is from the West? The sailor that navigates the globe says that he never finds the West; that it is always before him, but never found. He sails to one point which lies West, and when he is there he hears them telling of the West still as further on. God's forgiveness puts our sins into a far off land which we can never find, as into a deep which we can never fathom.

4. "I have blotted out as a cloud Thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud Thy sins." (Isa. xliv. 52.) When God accuses His people, He says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you." Here the cloud is between the Lord and His children, hiding His face and bringing darkness upon them, clouding their hearts and glooming their minds. But in forgiveness the sky is swept of clouds, the sun shines once more undimmed; God's hand sweeping through the heavens has cleared it, and in so doing has cleared the soul of its gloom.

5. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. viii. 12.) Forgetfulness is the greatest boon to a sinner. The ancients dreamed of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, into which the soul should plunge at death. There is but one such stream—the fountain that cleanses us, blots our sins from memory. *God can forget.* Blessed assurance to the sin-ridden, conscience-stung soul! "The true penitent," says Newman, "never forgives himself." God forgives, we say, and God forgets, and He invites us to lose the very memory of our sins in the sweet oblivion of His grace.

FAITH.

FAITH is a very easy thing to talk about; it is a very hard thing to have. Few seem to have it at all; and those who have most of it feel with deepest shame how weak their faith is. If a man does not know what faith is, or what it ought to do for him and in him, he can soon think he has all he need have. When he begins to realize how vast the new world is which faith opens out to the soul, and how priceless are the joys which only faith can grasp, he gets more hard to satisfy.

Faith is that by which a man receives the truth and grace of God, so that they are his own possession, doing him good, making him wise and strong and glad. It is as the eye, without which life is vain. It is the hand which takes and uses what is needful for life and safety, which God provides.

How dimly, how short a way, most men see into the world of things beyond the reach of the eye of flesh! How few have faith clear and strong enough to be able to live in the world of things unseen, and feel them as real a power upon their lives, as what their senses know of! How few take into account God and eternity, and the facts of man's state which the Bible tells of, and, as a matter of course, rule their thoughts, and words, and acts accordingly. Some think they have great faith because the truth of God seems plain to them, or because they can, with an effort, turn now and then from the world in which they live, to a strange and far off one. He who has a strong true faith breathes the air and gains the spirit of a high, pure world, and lives in the midst of what to the unbelieving has no existence. The truths of the Gospel are facts which must guide all hearts.

How few prize and rightly profit by the grace which God brings near to souls in so great variety of ways! How few feel the real worth and necessity of that by which spiritual life and strength are built up, as they feel the need of food and air for their bodily nourishment! How few show their ear-

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