

Our Story.

A DAUGHTER OF FIFE.

BY ANNE J. BARR, AUTHOR OF "JAN VEDDER'S WIFE." CHAPTER II.

THE UNKNOWN GUEST.

"Since was a form of life and light, That seen, became a part of sight; And rose where'er I turned mine eye. The Morning Star of Memory."

"Thou art more than all the shrines that hold thee."

THE next morning was a very stormy one; there was an iron-gray sky above a black tumbling sea; and the rain, driven by a mad wind, smote the face like a blow from a passionate hand. The boats were all at anchor, with no prospect of a fishing that day; and the fishermen, gathered in little groups, were muttering over the bad weather. But their talk was not bitter, like the complaints which landmen make over leveled crops. Regarding every thing that happened as the result of righteous decree, why should they rail at disappointment or misfortune? Some went slowly to a shed where boats were being built; others sat down within the doors of their cottages and began to knit their nets, or to mend such as were out of order.

David could take a landward route to Kinkell, among the snore rocks, for though the path was often a mere footing, it was well known to him; and as for the stormy weather, it seemed only a part of the darker and fiercer tempest in his own soul. He left Maggie early. She watched him climbing with bent head the misty heights, until a projecting rock hid him from view, then she went back to her household duties.

The first one was to prepare the room she had rented for its strange guest, and it gave her many a pang to fold away the "kirk clothes" of her father and brothers and lock them from sight in the big "kist" that was the family wardrobe. For clothing has a woeful individuality, when we put it away forever; and the shoes of the dead men had a personality that almost terrified her. How pitiful, how forsaken, how almost sentient they looked! Blind with tears, she hid them from sight, and then turned, as the bereaved must ever turn, back to the toil and need of daily life.

There was but one window in the room, a little one opening on hinges, and glazed with small diamond shaped bits of glass. The driving storm had washed it clean, she hung a white curtain before it, and brought from the living room a pot of scarlet geranium, and a great sea shell, from whose mouth hung a luxuriant musk plant. Its cool fragrance filled the room, and gave an almost dainty feeling to the spotlessness of the deal furniture and the homespun linen. Before the turf fire there was a square of rag carpet, and the bits of blue and scarlet in it were pretty contrasts to the white wood of the chairs and table.

The stranger was to have come about noon, but it was the middle of the afternoon when he arrived. The storm was then nearly over, and there was a glint of watery sunshine athwart the cold, green, tossing sea. Maggie had grown anxious at his delay, and then a little cross. At two o'clock she gave a final peep into the room and said to herself, "I'll just get on with my work, let him come, or let him be late." I cannot waste my time waiting for folk that dinna ken the worth o' time.

So when her lodger stood at her door she was at her knitting board, and patting the cakes so hard, that she did not hear him; until he said, "Good afternoon, Miss Promoter."

Then she turned sharply around, and answered, "Maggie Promoter, if it please you, sir." "Very well," he said gravely, "good afternoon, Maggie. Is your brother at home?" "No, sir; he's awa' to Kinkell. Your room is ready for you, sir."

As she spoke she was rubbing the meal from her hands, and she stood watching her with delight. He had wondered if her beauty would bear the test of daylight, or if it needed the broad shadows, and the dull glow of the burning turf and the oil crucible. But she stood directly the band of sunshine, and was only the more brilliantly fair for it. He was, not in love with her, he was sure of that, but he was interested by a life so vivid, so full of splendid colour, grace, and vitality.

With a little pride she opened the door of his room, and stirred up the glowing peats, and put the big rush chair before them—"And you can just call me, sir, when you want aught," she said "I'll go ben noo, and finish my cake baking."

"Maggie, this room is exactly what I wanted; so clean and quiet! I'm much obliged to you for allowing me to use it."

"You pay siller, sir, and there's nae call to say thank you!" With the words she closed the door and was gone. And somehow, the tone of reserve and the positive click of the latch made him feel that there would be limits he could not pass.

In a couple of hours he heard the little stir of David's return, and the preparation for tea. Maggie brought his table to the fireside and covered it with a square of linen, and set upon it his cup and plate. He had a book in his hand and he pretended to be absorbed in it; but he did not lose a movement that she made.

"Your tea is a' ready, sir." He lifted his eyes then, and again her clear candid gaze was caught by his own. Both were this time distinctly conscious of the meeting, and both were for the moment embarrassed.

"It looks good, Maggie, and I am hungry. Is your brother back?" "David is hame, sir. It was a hard walk he had. He's tired, I'm thinking."

The last words were said more to herself than to her lodger. She was somewhat troubled by David's face and manner. He had scarcely spoken to her since his return, but had sat thinking with his head in his hands. She longed to know what Dr. Balmuto had said to him, but she knew David would resent questioning, and likely punish her curiosity by restraining confidence with her for a day or two. So she spoke only of the storm, and of the things which had come into her life or knowledge during his absence.

"Kirsty Wilson has got a sweetheart, David, and her no sixteen yet." "Kirsty aye thocht a lad was perfect salvation. You shallna be mar than civil to her. She has heard tell o' the man staying wi' us. It wad be that brought her here nae doot?"

"She was not here at a'. Maggie Johnson told me. Maggie cam' to borrow a cup o' sugar. She said Cupar's boat tried to win out o' harbour after the storm. It could not manage though."

"It was wrang to try it. Folks shouldna tempt Providence." "The cakes baked weel to-day." "Ay, they are gude eating."

Then she could think of nothing more to say, and she washed the cups, and watched the dark, sad man bending over the fire. A vulgar woman, a selfish woman, would have interrupted that solemn session at her hearth. She would have turned Inquisitor, and tortured him with questions. "What's the matter?" "Is there anything wrong?" "Are you sick?" etc., etc. But when Maggie saw that her brother was not inclined to talk to her, she left him alone to follow out the drift of his own thought. He seemed unconscious of her presence, and when her active house duties were over, she quietly pulled her big wheel forward, and began to spin.

The turfs burned red, the crucible burned low, the wheel "hummed" monotonously, and Maggie stepped lightly to-and-fro before it. In an hour the silence became oppressive, she was sleepy, she wished David would speak to her. She laid her fingers on the broad wooden band and was just going to move, when the inner door was opened, and the stranger stood at it. His pause was but a momentary one, but the room was all picture to him, especially the tall, fair woman with her hand upon the big wheel, and her face, sensitive and questioning, turned toward her brother.

"David Promoter." "Ay, sir." He moved slowly like a man awakening from a sleep, but very quickly shook off the intense personality of his mood, and turned to the stranger with a shy and yet keen alertness.

"I dinna ken your name, sir, or I wad call you by it."

"My name is Allan Campbell." "Sit down, sir. You are vera welcome. Can I do aught to pleasure you?"

"I want my trunk from Largo. Yesterday the sea was too heavy to bring it. Can you get it for me to-morrow?"

"An' the sea be willing, sir."

"There is a box of books also, but they are very heavy."

"Books! We'll try and bring them ony way."

"You love books then?"

"Better than bread."

"What have you read?"

"I have read my Bible, and 'The Institutes, and the Scot's Worthies, and part o' the Pilgrim's Progress. But I dinna approve o' John Bunyan's doctrine. It's rank Arminianism."

"I have just finished a volume of Scott's poems. Have you read any of them?"

"Na, na; I hae nae skill o' poetry, sir, an' it be na the Psalms o' David."

"Let me read you a stanza; that I think you will enjoy."

He went for his book and drew a chair beside the little light, and read with a great deal of fire and feeling some passages from "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." He was soon sensible that he was gradually stirring in these two untutored souls feelings of which they had hitherto been unconscious. He put more and more passion into the words, finally he threw down the book, and standing erect, recited them with outstretched arms and uplifted face. When he ceased, David was listening like one entranced; and Maggie's knitting had fallen to the floor; for she had unconsciously risen, and was leaning at the open door, with a face that reflected every change of his own. It was as if the strings of a harp had snapped, and left the soul of the listeners in mid-air. With an effort the earthly plane was torn, and after a minute's pause, David said, "I ne'er heard words like them words. Money thanks to you, sir. I'm right glad it was a Scot wrote them; and he murmured softly—

"O Caledonia stern and wild! Land of brown heath and shaggy wood, Land of the mountain and the flood."

Still it was Maggie's shy, tremulous glance and luminous face that thanked and pleased Campbell most; and he lifted the book and went away, almost as much under the spell of the poet as the two simple souls who had heard his music for the first time.

There was a moment or two in which life seemed strange to the brother and sister. They had much the same feeling as those who awaken from a glorious dream and find sordid cares and weary pains waiting for them. David rose and shook himself impatiently, then began to walk about the narrow room. Maggie lifted her stocking and made an effort to knit, but it was a useless one. In a few minutes she laid it down, and asked in a low voice, "Will you have a plate o' parritch, David?" "Ay; I'm hungry, Maggie; and he'll maybe like one too."

So the pan was hung over the fire, and the plates and bowls set; and while Maggie scattered in the meal, and went for the milk, David tried to collect his thoughts, and get from under the spell of the Magician of his age. And though poetry and porridge seem far enough apart Campbell said a hearty "thank you" to the offer of a plate full. He wanted the food, and it was also a delight to watch Maggie spread his cloth, and bring in the hot savory dish of meal, and the bowl of milk. For her soul was still in her beautiful face, her eyes limpid and bright as stars, and the simple meal so served reminded him of the plain dignified feasts of the old rural deities. He told himself as he watched her, that he was living a fairer idyl than ever poet dreamed.

"Gude night, sir," she said softly, after she had served the food, "you took me into a new life the night, and thank you kindly, sir."

"It was a joy to me, Maggie. Good night."

She was a little afraid to speak to David; afraid of saying more than he would approve, and afraid of saying anything that would clash with the subject of his meditations. But she could not help noticing his restlessness and his silence; and she was wondering to herself, "why men-folk would be so trying and contrary," when she heard him say— "Grand words, and grand folk, Maggie; but there are far grander than these be."

"Than kings, and queens, and braw knights and fair laddies?" "Ay; what are they to angels and archangels, powers and dominions, purity, faith, hope, charity? Naething at a'."

"Maybe; but I wish I could see them, and I wish I could see the man who wrote anent them, and I wish you could write a book like it, David."

"Me! I have an ambition beyond the like o' that. To be his messenger and speak the words o' truth and salvation to the people! Oh Maggie, if I could win at that office, I wouldna envy king nor knight, no, nor the poet himself!" "Did you see the minister?"

"Ay; bring your chair near me, and I'll tell you what he said. You'll be to hear it, and as weel now, as again."

"Surely he had the kind word to-day, and you that fu' o' sorrow?"

"He meant to be kind. Surely he meant to be kind. He sent me word to come up to his study and wee Mysie Balmuto took me there. Eh, Mag-

gie, if I had a room like that! It was fu' o' books; books frae the floor to the roof-place. He was standing on the hearth wi' his back to the fire, and you ken hoo he looks at folk, through and through. 'Weel, David,' he said, 'what's brought you o'er the hills through wind and rain pour? Had you work that must be pushed in spite o' his work?' "I felt kind o' shamed then at my hurry, and I said, 'Doctor, you'll hae heard tell o' the calamity that has come to our house?' And he answered, 'I hae heard; but we willna call it a calamity, David, seeing that it was o' his ordering.'"

"It was very sudden, sir," I said, and he looked at me and said, 'His messengers fly very swiftly. Your father was ready, and I do not think he calls the young men, unless he wants them. It was not of the dead you came to talk with me?' I said, 'No, sir, I came to ask you about Maggie and myself.'"

"Then I told him hoo I longed to be a minister, and hoo father and the rest had planned to send me to Aberdeen this very year, and hoo there was still £50 which you wanted me to take, and he never said a word, but just let me go blithering and blundering, through the story, till I felt like I was the maist selfish and foolish o' mortals. When I couldna find anither word, he spoke up kind o' stern like—"

"What did he say? You be to tell me that noo."

"He said, 'David Promoter, you'll no dare to touch the £50 this year. Go back to the boats, and serve the Lord upon the sea for a twelve months. Go back to the boats and learn how to face hunger, and cold, and weariness with patience; learn to look upon death, and not to fear him. Forbye you cannot leave your sister her lane. Lassies marry young among your folk, and she'll need some pleasing. You would not surely send her from you with empty hands. You cannot right your own like with wrangling hers, not even by a law-bee.'"

"He shouldna hae said the like o' that. The siller isna mine, nor wasna meant for me, and I'll ne'er touch it. That I wou't."

"Marry Angus Raith, and tak' it, Maggie. He loves you weel."

"Angus Raith isna to be thocht o', and it's ill-fuck mixing wedding talk wi' death talk. The minister is right? Whatna for are we hurrying up the future? Let us be still and wait; good, as well as evil comes, and us not looking for it. I'm sorry you didna hae a pleasant visit."

"It wasna just unpleasant, I ken weel the minister is right. Put on a covering juil noo, Maggie, for the tide serves at six o'clock; and I'll be awa' to Largo the morn."

Maggie was up at gray dawn next morning, while yet the sea was dour, and douring on their perches, looking like patches of lake snow in the crannies of the black rocks. There was no wrath in the tide, only an irresistible set shoreward. When David was ready for his breakfast, Campbell was ready also; he had hatched to go with the boat, and David's face lighted up with satisfaction at the proposal. And Maggie was not ill-pleased to be left alone. She was restless, and full of strange thoughts, and needed the calm and strength of solitude.

It was an exquisite morning; the sea was dimpled and laughing in the sun, and the rocks of the bay were white and bare, and the sky was blue and clear, and the air was soft and sweet, and the sun was shining on her head and in her eyes, and she was leaning forward and picking it up, and then nod back an assurance of its safety. She turned away half angry at herself for the thrill of pleasure the trifling incident had given her. "It's my ain folk I ought to be thinking o', and no strangers; it's the dead and no the living that ought to be in my heart. Oh Maggie Promoter, what'e'er has come o'er you!"

To such reflections she was hasting with bent head back to her cottage, and trying to avoid a meeting with any of the few men and women about so early. But she was soon sensible of a rapid step following her, and before she could turn her head, a large hand was laid upon her shoulder, and Angus Raith was at her side.

"Sae you thocht to shun me, Maggie."

"You are wrang there, I didna even see you, Angus."

"That's the God's truth. You havena e'en for any body noo, but that proud, fine gentleman that's staying wi' you."

"Be quiet, Angus. Hoo daur you say the like o' that? I ne'er saw the man's face until yestreen; you shouldna think ill o' folk sae easy."

"What does he want here among fishers? They dinna want him, I'm vera sure. There's nae room for gentlemen in Pittenloch."

"Ask him what he wants. He pays for his room at Pittenloch; fourteen white shillings every week, he agreed wi' David for."

"Fourteen shillings!"

The magnitude of the sum astonished him. He walked silently by Maggie's side until she came to her door-step. He was a heavy-faced Celt; tall and dark-eyed; with the impatient look of a selfish greedy man. Maggie's resolute stand at her door-step angered him. "I'm coming in a we," he said dourly, "there are words to be said between us."

"You are wrang there too, Angus. I hae neither this, nor that to say to you; and I'm busy the day."

"I spoke to your father and your brother Wil, anent a marriage between us, an you heard tell o' it."

"Ay, they told me."

"And you let me walk wi' you frae the kirk on the next Sabbath.—I'm no going to be jilted, Maggie Promoter, by you."

"Dinna daur to speak that way to me, Angus, I never said I wad wed you, and I dinna believe I ever shall say it. Think shame o' yoursell' for speaking o' marrying before the tide has washed the footmarks o' the dead off the sea-sanda. Let go my hand, Angus."

"It is my hand, and I'll claim it as long as you live. And it will be ill for any other body that daurs to touch it."

"Daur indeed! I'll no be daured by any body, manfolk or womanfolk. You hae g'en me an' insult, Angus Raith, and dinna cross my door-stane any more, till you get the invite to do so."

She stepped within her open door and faced him. Her eyes blazed, her whole attitude was that of defiance. The passions, which in well-bred women are educated clean down out of sight, were in Maggie Promoter's tongue tip and finger tips. Angus saw it would not do to anger her further, and he said, "I meant nae harm, Maggie."

"I'll no answer you anither word. And mind what I told you. Dinna cross my door-stane. You'll get the red face if you try it."

"She could have shut the door, but she would have thought the act a kind of humiliation. She preferred to stand guard at its threshold, until Angus, with a black scowl and some muttered words of

anger, walked away. She watched him until he leaped into his boat, until he was fairly out to sea. Then she shut and barred the door; and sitting down in her father's chair, wept passionately; wept as women weep, before they have learned the uselessness of tears, and the strength of self-restraint.

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

FIRST QUARTER.

SIN AND DEATH.

LESSON II. January 9th. Gen. iii. 1-6, 17-19; memory verses 17-19.

GOLDEN TEXT.—By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.—Rom. v. 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Paradise lost by sin.

DAILY READINGS.

Mt. Gen. iii. 1-24 T. Matt. iv. 1-17 W. Rom. v. 12-21 Th. James I. 1-15, 19-20, 22, 24 F. 2 Peter i. 1-11. Sa. Eph. vi. 10; 17; 22. Su. 1 Peter i. 1-16.

NEW TESTAMENT TEXT, the temptation of Jesus, Matt. iv. 1-11. TIME.—B.C. 4004. Soon after the creation of Adam and Eve.

PLACE.—The Garden of Eden, probably somewhere in the large district through which the Euphrates flows.

MAN IN EDEN.—Innocent, perfect, but imperfect, not cultured or civilized backwardly.

TREE OF LIFE.—Probably a tree by whose qualities the body was so preserved from decay, and accidental injuries be healed; a type of immortality.

TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.—Not the tree of knowledge in general, but the tree by which Adam would gain the knowledge of good and evil. It was not to make him fall, but to make him good by choosing to obey. God meant him to know good and evil by experiencing the good; and to know evil by contrast. He chose to know them by experiencing the evil and learning good by contrast.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. The Serpent: a real serpent, but used by Satan, who is the great serpent; the dragon. Subtle: crafty, cunning, tricky; and hence used by Satan. 3. Let, ye die: body and soul. Death began the moment they disobeyed; they were shut out from the tree of life, and so their bodies began the process of decay. And sin is spiritual death. 4. Ye shall not surely die: Satan first planted a doubt of God's goodness; now he denies his truth. 5. Your eyes shall be opened: to see things now wholly hidden from them. Be as gods: angels, or as God. The holy beings they had had communion with. Knowing good and evil: they understood a knowledge of good by experiencing it; he knew it would be by losing it. This is the worst kind of fall, which has the form of truth. 17. In sorrow (or in toil) shall thou eat of it: i. e., the wild outside of Eden, whither they were driven. 18. Thou shalt be cursed: thou shalt grow unclean, and God's fruit shall be all away from thee. 19. Dust thou shalt be, and shalt return to dust: i. e., thou shalt be mortal, and shalt be transformed, as were the bodies of Enoch and Elijah in ascending to heaven.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS (to be assigned the previous Sabbath).—The Garden of Eden.—The tree of life.—The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.—The tempter and the serpent.—The temptation.—What was the fall: from what to what?—The effects of the fall.—How this account is a type of our temptations.—Compare with the temptations of Christ.—Our means of victory.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How was man created? The woman.—Where were they placed? How long ago did the story of this lesson occur?

SUBJECT: HOW PARADISE WAS LOST

I. MAN IN HIS BEAUTIFUL HOME.—Where was the garden of Eden? What were Adam and Eve to do there? What two trees there are mentioned? What was the Tree of Life for? What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What freedom of enjoyment was given to man? What restriction was laid upon them? What was the object of this command? Did God wish them to fall?

Is this a type of our lives? What is the forbidden tree to us? Why was a test needed, whether they would obey? Could they have known good and evil by resisting temptation better than by yielding to it?

II. THE BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION (vs. 1-5).—Who came into Eden to tempt man? (Rev. xx. 2.) Of what animal did he make use? Why did he not come in his own form? (Prov. i. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 3, 14.) What was his first suggestion to Eve? Her reply? What did he say in direct contradiction to God? Was there any apparent truth in what he said? Would they know good and evil? What did he know would be the real effect? Are lies in the form of truth the most dangerous of falsehoods? Could Eve have resisted?

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.—Compare this temptation with the temptation of Christ. (Matt. iv. 1-11.) How did he resist the devil? How was Moses tempted? (Heb. xi. 24-27.) How the Rechabites? (Jer. xxxv. 12-19.) Are we tempted in the same way? Give examples. Why does God permit us to be tempted? (Deut. viii. 2; Zech. xiii. 9; James i. 2, 3; 1 Peter i. 7.) How can we gain the victory? (Eph. vi. 10-13.) Show what Satan meant them to understand, and what he knew was the truth. Have any since preached Satan's sermon? Is it a proof of love to tell men they shall not surely die if they sin? What is the true way of becoming like God? (1 Peter, i. 3.)

III. DEFEAT AND RUIN (vs. 6, 17-19).—What was the result of this temptation? Show how it grew out of unbelief. How was Adam induced to yield? What was the first effect of this sin? (vs. 7-10.) Why were they afraid of God now? What was the punishment? Were the thorns and thistles within Eden or without? Where was Adam and Eve compelled to go? What was the effect upon the race? (Rom. v. 12.) Was there any hope or promise left?

What did Adam and Eve lose by their fall? Into what state did they fall? Was the nature of the ground changed? Was it better for them, now they had sinned, to be shut out of Eden and compelled to labour? What reasons have you to think that we would have done no better if in their place? Is this the most natural and simple account of the present character of man?