

The Inglenook.

Bell's Story.

BY ANNA ROSS.

How Bell Learned to Love the Bible.

She started to keep a diary, no one knowing about it, till this thought spoiled it for her: "If I were to die and people were to find it, they might think I wrote it for effect." She had to give it up. But she missed her diary. It had become a sort of living companion to her, and as weeks flew by she found herself getting colder and colder and her Bible less and less a pleasure to her. In fact, she did not love her Bible, but read it chiefly because she knew she ought to do so. Worse still, she sometimes would let the whole day go by without reading it at all. This she knew to be a very wrong and foolish thing, and yet it seemed just as bad to pretend to read it when her heart was not in it. Bell was very fond of story-books when she could get them. She began to be afraid that it was the stories that were making the Bible a dull book to her, and she thought that faithfulness required that the stories should be given up. No one told her so, but the voice of God in her own conscience. This was a sore struggle, but what could she do? Every Christian she ever read of loved the Bible, and she did not; and how could she ever grow to be a Christian worth anything if she did not learn to love it? The story-books were given up—yes fairly given up. There was a breakdown or two at the beginning, but the stern voice within gave her no peace, for she knew she was running for the crown of life; and oh, how she did want "so to run as to obtain it!" Still, except for occasional bits of brightness, the Bible kept its old cold place.

The ups and downs are too many to tell, but there was a great deal of discouragement for several years. The first volume of Spurgeon's Sermons fell into her hands, and was read with great delight. One sermon, however, about the Bible and its ever deepening interest troubled her. It brought painfully home again how different she was from other Christians. God seemed far away from her, hiding his face. Her temper was often tried, and often failed to stand the trial, and betrayed her into words and ways that made her ashamed to lift up her face to her heavenly Father at prayer. Sometimes her only comfort was this thought: "After all God is not surprised at me; he knew exactly how bad I was going to be when he took me for his own." They were sometimes tears of bitter shame and sorrow that preceded and accompanied her evening prayers. Poor little Bell! If God was not surprised, she was, because she could not be the sort of Christian she had meant to be.

After learning of the work that was going on in Bell's heart, Mr. Matheson had begun an extra course of reading and prayer along with her and another member of the circle of a like mind. One day at the little noon-worship this verse was read: "Now the God of grace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." It was an assurance of victory from the Master of the field that came to the dispirited little soldier with a great comfort. It was help for the helpless from One that is mighty. Another time she was climbing over the fence that ran along the rear end of the orchard, on her way to do an errand at a neighbor's. Thinking sadly of her own

want of success, her culpable failures, these words came brightly into her heart: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."—"Then he is as strong to save me as he ever was to save anybody," thought Bell, "and he is as ready to save now as he ever was to save any time." The Scripture says that experience worketh hope, but experience had been working hopelessness in this case, and properly too. But now hope was beginning to turn in the right direction. Another passage that about this time gave her satisfying comfort was this in Hebrews thirteenth: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Almost every clause of this passage had something in it. Bell wanted to emphasize. Each either fitted a need or gave wing to a hope. Oh, how intimately God has made his word to fit into the inmost experience of the human soul! Blessed be his name for his written word!

But still the daily Bible-reading was a drag and not a cheer to Bell's spirit. Wearily she asked the question, "What shall I do?" Presently a thought came. Instead of reading the Bible, she would get it off by heart, and then at least her mind could not wander about as it did at the reading. This was a serious undertaking, for Bell was always slow at committing; but what was at stake! She commenced at Colossians, learning three verses every day, and keeping up carefully the back verses. One petition in the seventeenth of St. John's Gospel had interested her some time before: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Along with her task, she used this verse as a prayer: "Sanctify me through thy truth: thy word is truth."

The first day's task gave her nothing special except a sort of quiet confidence that she was taking the right way. The second day brought nothing special either. But the last verse of the third day's work—that is, the ninth—had something in it that suited Bell. Paul, in praying for the Colossians, desires that they may be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." "Don't I need this?" thought Bell; and she took it up for herself: "Lord, fill me with the knowledge of thy will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

But the fourth day's verses seemed to her happy heart made on purpose for her. Every word was just what she wanted. It was enough: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." To walk "worthy of the Lord" and "unto all pleasing" (that surely means pleasing others); "fruitful, not only a little fruitful"; "increasing" in that precious knowledge which seemed so hard to make any

progress in; and then the adequate power that was to do it all—"all might," "according to his glorious power"—that was a perfect climax to one who had begun to know something of her own powerlessness. Yet it did not stop there. The next clause went on exhibiting the very perfection of the home-religion she knew was the right sort of religion for her: "All patience and long-suffering with forbearance." These were the verses that fed her the most, though the thanksgiving of the twelfth verse was wonderfully sweet too. Other verses as she plodded on shone out upon her—not very many, but one here and there. And sweetly have some that were passed unnoticed then become lamps to her feet in the years that have followed. Truly there is no field that so rewards labor as the inexhaustible, inestimable word of God.

Dear young Christian, if there is one thing the "principalities and powers" against which you "wrestle" will try to do, it is to starve your new nature to death. They will tell all sorts of lies, and supply your deceitful heart with any number of excuses for the neglecting of the study of the word of God. Now, the new nature "lives" upon "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If they can by any means keep you from prayerful, appropriating study of the Bible, they will in a very little while make you, so far as your Christianity is concerned, to look and act and feel as if there were no life in you. As we regularly sit down to three meals in the day, and seldom plead that we are so busy that we have to neglect our daily food, so we need to feed regularly upon the word of God if we would "grow as the lily and cast forth our roots as Lebanon." For the sake of life and health, eat heartily, and for the sweetness of it. There is nothing else on earth can give such sweet, deep, satisfying peace and joy as one word of the Bible simply taken in. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of mine heart."

Bell's Story, when completed will be ready in tract form. Single copies 5cts. or 35cts. per doz. prepaid. Apply to publisher, I. T. Pattison, 370 Bank St., or Mrs. Ross, Ottawa Ladies' College.

The Greatest Blunder of my Life.

Here are some "Blunders," written down by five hundred men, and to be found in the Crerar Library:

"The greatest blunder of my life was gambling."

"When I left my church and mother."

"My greatest blunder was when I first learned to smoke."

"When I left school before I was past the fourth grade."

"Did not stick to my trade."

"Was to fool away my time when I was at school."

"Not keeping my position, but grew slack in my work."

"Reading worthless books."

"Thinking that my boss could not do without me."

"Refused a steady position with a good firm."

"Would not hearken to the advice of older people."

"Not saving money when I was young."

"Beating some one out of money."

"Did not stick to anything."

"Careless about religious duties."

"Did not take care of my money."

"The greatest blunder of my life was not accepting Christ, and thereby avoiding many sorrows caused by serving Satan."—American Weekly.