

THE DAYS OF WESLEY.*

I.

WEDNESDAY, May 1st, 1745.

MOTHER always said that on the day I became sixteen she would give me a book of my own, in which to keep a diary. I have wished for it ever since I was ten, because mother herself always keeps a diary; and when anything went wrong in the house, she would retire to her own little light closet over the porch, and come out again with a serenity on her face which seemed to spread over the house like fine weather.

And in that little closet there is no furniture but the old rocking-chair in which mother used to rock us children to sleep, and a table covered with a white cloth, with four books on it,—the Bible, Bishop Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," Thomas à Kempis on the "Imitation of Christ," and the diary.

The three printed books I was allowed to read, but (except the Bible) they used in my childish days to seem to me very gloomy and grave, and not at all such as to account for that infectious peacefulness in mother's face and voice.

I concluded, therefore, that the magic must lie in the diary, which we were never permitted to open, although I had often felt sorely tempted to do so, especially since one morning when it lay open by accident, and I saw Jack's name and father's on the page. For there were blots there, such as used to deface my copy-book, on those sorrowful days when the lessons appeared particularly hard.

It made me wonder if mother too had her hard lessons to learn, and I longed to peep and see. Yes, there were certainly tears on mother's diary. I wonder if there will be any on mine.

To-night, as we were supping, and Hugh Spencer, the vicar's son with us, Betty the maid came, in great agitation, into the room, and exclaimed that a church parson had been mobbed, and all but killed, at Falmouth.

He had been preaching to the people in the open air, and was staying quietly in Falmouth, when the mob were excited against him, and led on by the crews of some privateers in the harbour, attacked the house in which he was, swearing they would murder the parson. The family fled in terror, leaving him alone with one courageous maid-servant. The mob forced the door, filled the passage, and began to batter down the partition of the room in which the parson was, roaring out, "Bring out the Canorum.† Where is the Canorum?" Kitty, the maid, through whom Betty heard of it, exclaimed, "Oh, sir,

what must we do?" He replied, "We must pray." Then she advised him to hide in a closet; but he refused, saying, "It was best for him to stay just where he was." But he was as calm as could be, and quietly took down a looking-glass which hung against the wall, that it might not be broken. Just then the privateers' men, impatient of the slow progress of the mob, rushed into the house, put their shoulders to the door, and shouting, "Avast, lads! avast!" tore it down and dashed it into the room where the clergyman was. Immediately he stepped forward in their midst, bareheaded, that they might all see his face, and said, "Here I am. Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you?—or you?—or you?" So he continued speaking until he had passed through the midst of the crowd in the street. There he took his stand, and, raising his voice, said, "Neighbours, countrymen! do you desire to hear me speak?" The mob stood hesitating and abashed, and several of them cried vehemently, "Yes, yes; he shall speak!—he shall! Nobody shall hinder him!" and two of their ring-leaders turned about and swore not a man should touch him. Then they conducted him safely to another house, and soon after he left the town in a boat.

"A brave heart the parson must have had, truly," said father. "I had rather face an army than to be pulled to pieces by a mob. But what did the mob attack him for?"

"Because he will preach in the fields, Master," said Betty, "and the people will go to hear him, and the parsons won't have it, and the magistrates read the Riot Act on him the day before."

"But parsons and privateers' men do not usually act in concert," said father, "and the Riot Act seemed more wanted for the mob than for the parson?"

"I have heard of them, sir!" said brother Jack. "Some say this parson has been sent here by the Pretender. The common people go to hear him by thousands, and he speaks to them from a hedge or a door-step, or any place he can find; and the women cry, and fall into hysterics."

"Not the women only, master Jack," interposed Betty. "My brother-in-law, as wild a man as ever you saw, was struck down by them last summer, and he has been like a lamb ever since."

"What struck him down, Betty?" said mother, in a bewildered tone.

"It is the words they say?" said Betty,—"they are so wonderful powerful! And they do say that they be mostly Bible words, and the parson is a regular church parson—none of your low-lived Dissenters—and if he comes in our parts, I shall go and hear him."

"But, Betty, you must take care of what you are about," said mother. "There are wolves in sheep's clothing; and I do not understand women going into hysterics and men being struck

down. There is nothing like it in the Acts of the Apostles. I hope, indeed, it is no design of the Jesuits."

But Betty stood her ground. "I am no scholar, missis," said she; "but I should like to hear the parson that turned my brother-in-law into a lamb."

"And I," said father, "should like to see the man who can quiet a mob in that fashion."

"And I," said Hugh Spencer quietly to me, "should like to hear the sermons which bring people together by thousands."

I do not know that I should have thought so much about it if our vicar had not preached about it on the next Sunday.

The things our vicar preaches about seem generally to belong to times so very long ago, that it quite startled us to hear him say that in these days a new heresy had sprung up, headed by most dangerous and fanatical persons calling themselves clergymen of the Church of England. This new sect, he said, styled themselves Methodists, but seditiously set all method and order at defiance. They had set all England and Wales in a flame, and now, he said, they threatened to invade our peaceful parish. He then concluded by a quotation from St. Jerome (I think), likening the heretics of his day to wolves, and jackals, and a great many foreign wild beasts. He gave us a catalogue of heresies from the fourth century onward, and told us he had now done his part as a faithful shepherd, and we must do ours as valiant soldiers of the Church.

Betty thought our vicar meant that we should be valiant like the privateers' men at Falmouth; but I explained to her what I thought he really meant.

But in the evening, as I was reading in the Acts of the Apostles how the magistrates and the mob seemed to agree in attacking the Apostles; and about the riot at Ephesus and the calmness of St. Paul, I wondered if the Apostle looked and spoke at all like that brave clergyman at Falmouth.

And my dreams that night were a strange mixture of that old riot at Ephesus, and this new riot at Falmouth, and Foxe's "Book of Martyrs."

Hugh says the clergyman's name is the Reverend John Wesley, and that he is a real clergyman, and fellow of a college at Oxford.

To-day a letter came from Aunt Henderson to father, inviting him and me to pay a visit to them and Aunt Beauchamp in London. She said it would be a pity to let slip this opportunity, it was time I should be learning something of the world; and Aunt Beauchamp, who was staying at Bath for the waters, would fetch me in her coach from Bristol, if we could get as far as that.

Father would not hear of going himself, saying he had seen enough of the world, and had done with it; but he was very earnest that I should go. He said I ought not to mope my life away in Cornwall.

Mother turned rather pale, and spoke of the perils of the world for such a child as me.

But father would not heed her; he has found a ship about to sail from Falmouth to Bristol, and he himself will accompany me thus far. So all is

settled, and mother says no doubt it is best.

My box is packed, all but the corner into which I must squeeze my diary, if it were only for the precious words at the end in mother's handwriting.

I am glad, now it is settled, that it is so near. I cannot bear to meet mother's eyes, and see her try to smile as she turns them away, and feel how long they have been resting on me.

Oh, I wish I were back again, or that things need never change!

Mother came in as I had finished these words, and brought me some little bags of lavender she had just finished to lay in my linen. She saw I had been crying, and bade me go to bed at once, and finish my packing in the morning.

Then she knelt down with me by the bedside, as she used when I was a little child, and said the Lord's Prayer aloud with me, and saw me safely into bed, and tucked me in as when I was a little child, and kissed me, and wished me good night in her own sweet, quiet voice.

But when she went away I cried, and almost wished she had not come.

All the days and nights I am away from her shall I not feel like a child left alone in the dark?

But then came on me the echo of her voice saying, "Our Father which art in heaven," and if I can keep that in my heart, I cannot feel like a child alone in the dark.

I suppose that is why our dear Saviour taught it to us, and not only taught it us, but said it with us, that we might feel, as it were, his hand in ours when we say it, and so be wrapped all around with love.

HACKNEY, near London.

It has happened as mother said. The first few days were dreadful. I felt like a ghost in another world,—I mean a kind of heathen ghost in a world of shadows it did not belong to.

Mother stood like a white statue at the door when I rode away on the pillion behind father; Jack laughed and made jests, partly to cheer me up, and partly to show himself a man; Betty hoped I should come back safe again, and find them all alive, "but no one ever knew;" and the only refuge I could find was to fly from all the uncertainty; straight to him with whom all is life and certainty; to fly from circumstances to God himself, and say,— "Thou knowest. Thou carest. Keep them and me."

And then I became calm, and could even talk to father as we rode along, and think of the last requests I wanted to make for the animals and the flowers, which had to be cared for while I was gone.

It did make me proud to see how noble father looked in his plain old suit of clothes. Every one knew he was a "born gentleman;" and when cousins met us in their velvets, and laced suits, and hats, I thought he looked like a prince in disguise among them.

It is worth while coming into the world a little, if only to learn what father is.

And cousins felt it too. One of the first things Cousin Harry said to me when we were all in the coach on our way to London was,—

"Your father looks like an old general, Kitty. One would never think he had been rusticated for is

* Condensed from "The Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevilyan," by the author of the "Schonberg Cotta Family."

† A slang name for Methodist in Cornwall. See Wesley's Journal, 1845.