

Our Story.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF MCNEIL.

BY AMELIA E. BARR, Author of "Jon Valder's Wife," "The Daughter of Five," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

The season was at its height when the Maxwells reached London, and for a few weeks the various society newspapers mentioned Grizelda often enough to give her father and sister some idea of the life she was leading. But a year's interval of time makes many changes. Grizelda herself lacked the fresh charm of the bride, the glad joyousness which had attracted all to her, and newer debutantes held her former high social place. It made little matter that to the thoughtful and the wisely observant she was really far lovelier woman. The mass of society is neither wise nor thoughtful, it does not stop to investigate changes; it treats them at their apparent value; and undoubtedly Lady Maxwell was not the bright, brilliant, obviously beautiful woman she had been during the previous year. Towards the close of the season there was to be a ball at the Earl of Laurier's. Lord Maxwell manifested a singular eagerness for an invitation, and an unusual regard for his wife's appearance there. He delighted Grizelda by critically examining her dress, and by his approval of it. He even complimented her upon her beauty, and drawing her to his side, kissed her with a shadow of his former tenderness. He could have taken no more effectual method to add the last grace to it. The few kind words brought a glory of colour into her cheeks; the kiss, a wonderful light into her dark blue eyes. She took his arm with something of her old confidence, and he did not chill it by sneers and indifference. She wondered at her own happiness. She glanced with such pleasure into his face that even his hard heart was smitten with a moment's remorse for the unnecessary suffering he had caused her. It was so easy to make her beautiful and glad that he almost thought it would be worth his while to do so. After dancing some time she became suddenly weary, and her partner took her to a small couch a little aside from the moving throng. For a few minutes she was left unattended, and a shadow of sadness came into her face. It came from her heart, which was vaguely reminding her that she was weaker, less buoyant in step, less attractive altogether than she had once been. Into this thought a name was dropped, a name she had never before heard, and yet which gave her a shock, and affected her as if some interior voice had said, at the same moment, "Grizelda."

"Miss Julia Cassell?" She said it over to herself, and when her partner returned to her she asked if Miss Cassell was present. "Have you not seen her? Stand a little to this side, and you will have the pleasure. She is more than usually fascinating to-night. Ah! Lord Maxwell is dancing with her, I see. I believe, indeed, they are very old friends." He went on talking of Cassell's Court, and Maxwell's old friendship with the family, and a score of other things in which the two names were blended together. Grizelda heard the words as a wandering accompaniment to her own far more vivid thoughts. For she knew the look upon her husband's face. She had seen him bend to her in the same winning manner when he had wooed her from her duty and her home in the Ederloch fir wood. She had parted from him with a smile. When they met again his face was dark and his manner cold. He gave her his arm until they reached their carriage, then he withdrew himself as if they were thousands of miles apart. Grizelda did not dare to talk. She saw that he had shut himself into a reverie which he would not permit her to enter, and when the weary drive was over she went to her room sick with the unkind disappointment, and trembling with the presence of coming sorrow. She had no heart left; her long silk garments trailed up the broad stairway as if they felt the weight of its despair. Her maid was not present, and she did not call her. She was glad to be alone. She fastened the door of her room, and stood still with hands locked, and downcast, to collect her shocked and scattered thoughts. The grey dawn creeping into the room was not more warm than her face; and the moonlight beauty of the pearls around her throat and wrists added a strange pathos to her bewilderment of grief. She had forgotten them. At that moment all the externals of life were forgotten. She was only conscious of the misery in her heart; of the yearning for the love that was lost; of one sorrow answering to another sorrow until her whole nature longed and ached for some word of comfort. Then she remembered the words of her father. But it was neither to him nor to Helen she would go. Only "the friend above all others" could help her in this hour. There was a beautiful little engraving of the "Man of Sorrows" on the wall. It had been George Selwyn's bridal gift to her, and more than once it had been tragically blest with those "tokens of sorrow" which are among the "secret coils" not uncommon in the experience of the loved children whom God

chastens. A glimmer of the dawn was on the pale, uplifted face, and on the crown of thorns, and as she stood with the sad question of her heart before her, she remembered suddenly some lines Selwyn very often repeated:—
The old and grey who travel wearily,
All who lack bread, all who strive and sigh,
Each motherless little one,
Mothers whose little ones are in the sky,
No pain is pain while Thou art nigh!

and with the words a sense of consolation and strength came to her. She knew not how, for in mystery each soul abides, yet she surely felt that with Him nigh all sorrow might be borne; and that
The tasks in hours of insight willed,
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

CHAPTER VIII.—BROKEN PLANS.

Titus deluges, descending on the plains, Sweep o'er the yellow year, destroy the pains Of flitting oxen and the peasant's gains. The shepherd climbs the cliff, and sees from far The wasteful ravage of the wat'ry war Bear down the dams with unresisted way, And sweep the cattle and the cots away.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

One evening early in the following August, the Laird and the minister were walking together from the new hotel. It was nearly ready for the furnishing and plenshing, and the Laird was very proud of the excellent way in which all had been wrought. "No half-and-half work there," he said, looking backward to the building. "I examined every stone and every plank with my own eyes. I like all my work to be done at the first time—no patching up afterwards."
"If you do not watch yourself better Laird, you will fall and sink altogether to the level of your age, to keeping an hotel and making a trifle of money, and the like of that."
"You have your own schemes, too, Brodick, and you are just as proud of them as I am of mine. While we are in this world we must fash with this world; and until you yourself are more than a man donna throw stones at me."
"It matters something, Laird, as to the things we fash about. I trust I am busy for the good of others. I wouldn't think much of my work if it was just for myself."
"You have a habit of talking of my work as if it was a kind of new-fangled idea for money-making which my forefathers would have thought scorn of. Now I hope I know the McNeils better than you do, and I am particularly well satisfied that all of them were for money-getting in the way possible to their day and generation. They lifted cattle and harried their neighbours because there were no English stravaiging up the highlands then days. I shall take my toll, of course, from men coming through my country, but I shall give them good food and lodging for it. And it is not you that ought to object to new ways. You have more of them than the college that licensed you would like, minister."

"Colleges don't know everything, Laird. They make divines; they don't make ministers. It is the poor and the sick and the sorrowful that make ministers."
"We should have miserable theologians from poor folk and sick folk, Brodick."
"Ay, Laird; but if men are to be good theologians before they are good Christians our blessed Heaven will be empty."
"I dislike new ideas in religion; religion is not a progressive science like—"

"Like money-making? You are wrong, McNeil. Religion is progressive. The faith of Christ is meant to fit every age. Its ways of working must therefore conform to every age. The McNeils are not surely the sole inheritors of that freedom?"
"I know well what you are after, minister. You have got a new kirk on your brain now. I heard of it from Helen."
"The old one will not seat half the clan, and when the hotel is opened next year where are the people in it to worship? For the week-days you offer them shooting and fishing and sport of all kinds—what about the Sabbath?"
"It is not likely that many of them will want to come to an Established Church. If you take ten Scotchmen from anywhere you will find nine of them smitten with Dissent of some kind; and as for Englishmen, they dinna think a church is a church unless it be the unadulterated Church of England. Why, Brodick, you have not been able to get your own parishioners to worship together yet!"
"They are drawing nearer to it, Laird."
"Not they! You could as easily move Ben Cruachan across to Ben More as you could get Gael and Lowlander to call each other brother."
"We are told, McNeil, that mountains can be moved by faith. Why not, then, by love? I am a servant of God. I do not think it any presumption to expect impossibilities."
"Well, Brodick, a new kirk is just an impossibility—but thanks be! the castle is in sight, and I'm glad, for your conversation has not been as pleasant as usual. Don't turn your own way, Brodick. Come in, man, and let us have a bite of sup together."
"There is going to be a storm soon, Laird; there's no mistaking that old, mysterious hungering sound in the waves."
McNeil turned and looked over them. "You are right, Brodick. The black clouds are gathering in the west,

and it is growing dark much quicker than it should do."
"I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it"—that is what God said to his servant Job anent such a sea as we are now looking at. Oh, McNeil! how miserably small are our grandest works when we see the Almighty with our eyes, clothing (the sea) in clouds, and binding it in the thick darkness, and setting "bars and doors before it," so that if a storm comes we know that right here its "proud waves will be stayed."
"We are not God Almighty, Brodick; and we are not called upon to measure our works with His works. You are wonderful sombre to night. Come in, and Colin and Helen will maybe suit you better than myself."
Colin and Helen stood together at the window watching the gathering clouds. His arm was around her. Her fair head was against his shoulder, and his dark, handsome face was bent towards it. They had been talking of Grizelda, and Helen's eyes had a troubled look. The Laird noticed it at once, and felt an unpleasant shock when Colin answered his query as to "what they had been worrying about" thus—"There is no letter again from Grizelda, and Helen fears she is ill."
"Where was the last from?"
"From Venice. She said they were going to Rome to spend the winter."
"Very well; letters do not come from Rome as the birds flies. There will be delays at both ends, and all the way too. Colin, you are a poor lover to let your wife weep for anything. You should smile away her fears, my lad."
"He does far better, father; he shares them with me."
"Uncle, I was saying to Helen that if you were willing we might be married next month, and make our wedding trip to Rome. We should see Grizelda then."
"It is a very good idea," answered the minister.
"You are none of you thinking of me. What will I do here by myself through the long winter months?"
"That! Laird, you have the new hotel. It has filled your life for the last two years or thereby. You had better get the wedding past before you throw the doors open. When all the world is coming to Ederloch you'll have no time to fash your head with such a small matter as two young things loving each other."
"You are in a most uncomfortable temper to-night, Brodick, but good-will or ill-will, your words have a grain of wisdom in them."
Then, supper being ready, they drew around the table, and finished the discussion over it. But such opposition as the Laird made was feeble. He had himself been uneasy about Grizelda. He had long seen that Colin's impetuosity for an early marriage would have to be submitted to, and he had become so fond of Colin that the surrender of Helen to him was not in his imagination so painful as it had once been. For as to any actual surrender of the comfort of her continual presence, there was no question of that. There would be no change in his home, in its beautiful order and ordering, and Helen had never neglected his lightest wish or put her lover one moment before him. He had no fear that to a husband he would have to resign the smallest title of his rights as a father.
(To be continued.)

and it is growing dark much quicker than it should do. He said unto Him: see Matt xvi. 63. He put Him under oath and compelled Him to criminate Himself. Son of the Blessed: i. e., Son of God. 62. And Jesus said: I am: to be silent now would be to deny the truth. Sitting on the right hand of power: omnipotent, having all power under his control. Coming in the clouds of heaven: as promised in Matt. xvi. 27, 28, should take place in that generation, and hence occurring at the destruction of Jerusalem. Also and more fully on the Judgment Day, at the end of the world. 63. Rent his clothes: see 2 Kings xviii. 37. Originally a natural outburst of grief, but later it became a mere form, regulated by law. 64. Blasphemy: had he not been the Messiah, it would have been blasphemy. Condemned him: the execution of the sentence belonged to the Roman government. 65. Prophecy: i. e., tell us while blindfolded who struck thee. (See Luke xiii. 62.)

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—The order of events.—The witnesses against Jesus.—How they were false.—Why Jesus kept silence.—Meaning of v. 62.—Peter's denials.—The mockery.—Why the people mocked Jesus.—Modern applications.

QUESTIONS. REVIEW.—Where and by whom was Jesus arrested? At what time of the night was it? Where was he first taken? (John xviii. 13)

INTRODUCTION.—How closely is this lesson connected with the last? Give the time and place.

SUBJECT: JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS ENEMIES.

I. THE TRIBUNAL (v. 55). Before whom was Jesus tried? (See also Matt. xvi. 57.) What can you tell about the Sanhedrin? Was this a regular meeting? (See Helps.) What kind of witnesses did they seek? If they had sought to know the truth, what kind of witnesses could they have found in abundance? (Luke vii. 21, 22.)

II. THE ACCUSATION (vs. 56-59). What kind of witnesses first appeared against Jesus? What showed that their testimony was false? How many witnesses were necessary? (Deut. xix. 15.) Of what did they accuse Jesus? (v. 64.) What was the punishment of blasphemy? (John xix. 7; Lev. xxiv. 16.) What further accusation did they bring against Him afterwards before Pilate? Luke xxiii. 2.) What did two at last say they had heard? Was their report true? What had Jesus said something like it? (John ii. 19-22.) What were the differences between the report and the facts?

III. THE PRISONER (vs. 60-64). What did Jesus say in answer to this accusation? Why did he keep silence? (See Lev. xiii. 7.) What did the high priest demand under oath? (See Matt. xvi. 63.) Who is meant by the "Blessed"? What was Jesus' reply? What change would take place some day in the relations of Jesus and the chief priests? For what was Jesus now condemned? Would his claims have been blasphemy if they had been false? To what hour did they now adjourn? (Luke xxii. 66.) What characteristics of Jesus do you find in this account? Should we sometimes keep silence when falsely accused? What time is referred to in v. 62? Meaning of rending the garments?

IV. PETER'S DENIALS. Where was Peter all this time? (John xviii. 15-18.) Doing what? Relate the story of Peter's denying Christ. (Mark xiv. 66-72.) How long a time was the trial continued? (Luke xxii. 59.) What recalled Peter to his right mind? (Mark xiv. 72.) How did Peter repent? What shows the difference between his repentance and that of Judas?

V. JESUS MOCKED (v. 65). How was Jesus treated while waiting for the Sanhedrin to gather together legally? Why did they treat him so? Are there any such mockeries now? Is it mean as well as wicked to ill-treat those in our power? How do you treat Jesus?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. I. Unbelievers try to find, not the truth about the Bible, but some fault in it. II. To do this they pervert and distort its truths. III. It is wise to be silent under false accusations before those who are determined to pervert everything said. Do not cast pearls before swine. IV. The time is coming when right and truth, though now weak, shall rule the world. V. Peter proved his repentance true by living ever after a noble life. VI. Bad men love to ridicule those who are better than they, in order to quiet their own consciences.—Peloubet

A HOLY act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life.—Robertson. By these things examine thyself: By whose rules am I acting, in whose name, in whose strength, for whose glory? What faith, humility, self-denial and love of God and to man have there been in all my actions?—Mason. Do not be afraid of sorrow nor yet to try to cheat yourself into fancying it is a blessed thing in itself. It is only the way to joy. It is because we want joy that we must accept sorrow.—Edward Garrett.

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

LESSON ix, June 2, 1889.

JESUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

Mark xiv. 55-65.

COGNATE VERBS 55, 56.

GOLDEN TEXT.—They hated me without a cause—John vi. 25.

CENTRAL TRUTH. Innocence acting nobly in the presence of enemies.

DAILY READINGS. M. Mark xiv. 55-65. Tw. Matt. xxvii. 59-68. W. Mark xiv. 66-72. Th. Luke xxii. 54-71. F. John xviii. 15-27. Sa. Ps. li. 1-12. Su. Act. vi. 7-15.

TIME.—April 7th, A. D. 30. Early morning, between two and three o'clock.

PLACE.—The palace of Caiaphas the high priest, in Jerusalem.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—Matt. xxvii. 59-68. With v. 65, Luke xxii. 63-65. John xviii. 15-27.

ORDER OF EVENTS.—(1) Trial before informal meeting of the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas presiding. (2) Peter denies Christ during the trial. (3) Adjudgment till daylight, because it was not lawful to condemn any one to death in the night. (4) Mockery by the Jews.

CIRCUMSTANCES.—This lesson begins with the trial before Caiaphas referred to in the last verses of the last lessons.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—55. Council: The Jewish Sanhedrim, or court. This was not a regular meeting, because they could not lawfully meet till sunrise. To death: not to ascertain the truth, but to kill Him. 58. I will destroy: he had not said so, see John ii. 19. 60. High priest: Caiaphas. 61. Held His peace: because it was useless

to explain to those who were determined to pervert everything He said. Said unto Him: see Matt. xxvi. 63. He put Him under oath and compelled Him to criminate Himself. Son of the Blessed: i. e., Son of God. 62. And Jesus said: I am: to be silent now would be to deny the truth. Sitting on the right hand of power: omnipotent, having all power under his control. Coming in the clouds of heaven: as promised in Matt. xvi. 27, 28, should take place in that generation, and hence occurring at the destruction of Jerusalem. Also and more fully on the Judgment Day, at the end of the world. 63. Rent his clothes: see 2 Kings xviii. 37. Originally a natural outburst of grief, but later it became a mere form, regulated by law. 64. Blasphemy: had he not been the Messiah, it would have been blasphemy. Condemned him: the execution of the sentence belonged to the Roman government. 65. Prophecy: i. e., tell us while blindfolded who struck thee. (See Luke xiii. 62.)

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