

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

"I WILL GIVE YOU REST."

When in death and sin I wandered
Far away from Jesu's care,
All His gifts and mercies squandered,
More than my desert or share;
Then no peace nor consolation
Gathered round my aching heart,
Till I found His great salvation
Was for me, the better part.

Then I came, sin-stained, and bleeding,
To His cross, His cross of shame;
Saw Him, wounded, interceding,
Pleading for my soiled name,
Saw my Life, my Lord, my Saviour,
Pleading at the throne for me;
Needing grace for good behaviour,
Daily grace to keep me free.

Yes, I came without delaying,
Told my wretchedness to Him—
All confessed, with trembling, praying
Further grace for further sin;
For I read in the Evangels
How the foe surrounds us still
With his hosts of legion angels,
Leading captive soul and will.

Weak I am and prone to languish,
Even in His courts I fall,
Tossed with doubts and fears and anguish,
Even while His name I call.
Jesus! hear my piteous wailing;
From the dust I cry to Thee;
Send Thy grace, that, never failing,
Bids the sin bound soul be free.

—By R. S. B.

BEN, THE GORDON BOY.

CHAP. XIII.—CONTINUED.

There he stood before them in the strength of his youth, in his well fitting uniform, his young face lit up with earnestness. He was choosing the right path, the path they might have chosen. Was it too late now? was it possible even for them to turn right about face and begin afresh?

Then Ben turned to little Nell, baby Nell as he still called her.

'I must go now, little Nell,' he said huskily. Then he turned to his father again.

'Father, won't you go with me part of the way? I haven't seen much of you?'

Collins took up his cap without a word, and at once followed his boy. A hard frost had set in, and the roads were hard and dry, above the stars were shining in their brilliancy. For some distance the two walked on in silence. It was not till they were quite clear of the village, and the passers by came only at long intervals, that Collins spoke.

'Ben, you're right; I wish I and your mother could begin afresh. I almost think I would if she would begin with me. God only knows what a struggle it would be.'

'I am sure it would father, but God will help you if you only ask him. I'm sure you cannot be happy living as you do. That man at the Hunters' Arms gets all your money, while the little ones haven't food to eat. I think baby Nell looks very sadly, she's so pale and thin.'

'She's not so much of a baby now,' said Collins, 'I think she's gone four.'

'I suppose she is; but haven't you noticed her poor arms, and her toes peeping out of her boots?'

Collins shivered slightly. He had seen the toes peeping out that very night, but he scarcely liked being reminded of it.

'Work's so very scarce,' said Collins, apologetically.

'It's not so scarce as all that,' said Ben, firmly. 'Won't you look this straight in the face

to-night, father, and see that it is the drink that does it. We might have as happy a home as any one if it were not for that. It's all possible if you will only ask God to help you. I think Miss Carew is right, we can't get along alone, we need His help day after day. But I must walk on sharp, or I shall be too late for my train. I must be in barrack by ten o'clock. Good-bye, father.'

Collins stood and watched the lad till he was out of sight, then turned and slowly walked homewards.

CHAP. XIV.—PENSION DAY.

It was a wonderful thing for Collins to pass the Hunters' Arms as he did that night, and his wife could scarcely believe her ears when she heard him opening the cottage door. They were very quiet that night, these two, and the children looked at one another and wondered. They crept off to bed, and whispered to each other 'what could have overfitted?'

'I hope the boy got his train,' said the mother when the last child had disappeared.

'Yes, I think so; he is not the lad to be late,' said his father.

Then the two relapsed into silence, and by ten o'clock the lights were out in the cottage. But it was a long time before sleep was to come to either of them. Their boy's words stirred them to their very depths, and they were both looking their life straight in the face. Then the neighboring bells burst upon the night air ringing the Old Year out and New Year in. One more year was passed and gone, never to be recalled; what would the New Year bring?

At last Mrs. Collins fell into a troubled sleep, and in her sleep she dreamed. She dreamed that she was drowning, every second she was sinking deeper and deeper in the waters. And while she sank, her whole life seemed to pass before her. Scenes of sin followed in quick succession, and though she had no power against it, she was compelled to look, and saw herself as she had never seen before. In her despair she cried for help, and then she saw a hand stretched out to help her, a strong and loving hand, that laid hold of her and bore her above the boiling waters till she was safe.

When she awoke she was still trembling with her agony of fear, but she laid quite still, and thought quietly over the wonders of the night. She knew now how black she was, but she knew too that there was One and only One who could save her. It was Christ's loving hand that had been stretched out to hold her up, and if she were to begin a new life, as Ben had asked her, it must be Christ alone who could render it possible. He alone could wash away the blackness of her life, and restore her to the likeness of God. In the morning she told her husband all her story, and with one mind they determined with God's help to begin life afresh.

It was again pension day. A hard day to begin the battle, and they even scarcely knew how hard the fight would be. Surely the Captain of the Lord's Host was by their side that day.

As they walked up to the postoffice together to claim their money, several of their old friends were standing about. Collins only gave them a passing nod, but when he came out they were not satisfied with such a greeting.

'Come along, mate,' said one; 'you'll stand treat to-day, and pay us back some old scores.'

'No,' said Collins, firmly; 'my wife and I have said good-bye to the old life; we've had enough of it.'

At first came jeers, then persuasions, and at last, as their way led past the Hunters' Arms, they laid hands on him and tried to drag him in. The struggle was a hard one, but at last Collins shook himself free, and amid jeers and taunts he and his wife passed on.

'We'll go and pay our rent first, wife, said he, 'the sooner some of the money is out of my pocket the better.'

There were arrears of rent to pay, which made a big hole in their little store, but it was with lightened hearts that they left the landlord's door.

'I think we'll get some boots for the children next,' he said, 'but we won't buy them here, we're better out of Rengate to-day, I'm thinking.'

'You're right, Collins: I'll run in with a bit of dinner for the children, and then we'll set off together.'

And so they did, but Mrs. Collins was to be waylaid this time. The news had soon spread that Collins had drawn his pension and was not using it in the usual way. This would never do and a woman who had done more than any other to lead Mrs. Collins astray was sent to bring her back in triumph among her old associates.

But even her persuasions were useless, and at last she left them, and Collins and his wife set out together. It was dusk before they reached home, and the children, expecting them to return as usual on pension days, trembled as they heard them come up the path. But their astonishment knew no bounds when they saw them walk in with parcels in their arms, and cheery words upon their lips.

'Come here, little Nell,' said the mother; 'father's bought you some new boots; are they not beauties?'

The children looked on admiringly as Mrs. Collins lifted the little one to her father's knee, and proceeded to take off the poor old boots, out of which the toes were peeping only too visibly.

'There now, what do you think of that? she said, holding up the little foot, while Nell laughed again with delight. 'And listen, children, here are a pair of boots for Bob, and some cakes for tea—don't they look good?'

'We'll hope next pension day, please God, to buy you all some boots,' said the father, gravely; 'but we've paid the rent, and got a home over our heads.'

Then Bob tried the boots on, and declared them to be a perfect fit, while the parents looked on with a mixture of sorrow and gladness, thinking of the past days, when so often the children could not go to school because they had no shoes to their feet.

Then the kettle was put on to boil, and surely there was no happier tea table than New Year's night than could be seen in Ben's old home. But Ben was far away busy with his camp life again. What would not the boy have given for one peep into his cottage home.

More than a week passed before Mrs. Collins summoned up courage to go and see Miss Carew. Each day brought many temptations, many struggles, but each day's victory made the next day easier. The frost had broken up, and Collins, who was a good workman when he gave his mind to it, happily was taken on to a good piece of work not far from home.

CHAPTER XV.—BEN'S HERO.

While Ben steadily pursued his life as a young soldier in the breezy camp at Aldershot, his parents did daily battle with their old enemies, for drink is not a single handed foe. With it often are many other sins. But any one who knew them felt that the change was very real, it was indeed a complete right about face. The more they desired to do right, the more they saw much in their children to deplore, and found to their cost that years of bad training and bad example were not easily set right. Baby Nell, too, had never overcome the exposure to the night air after the heated atmosphere of the bar of the 'Hunters' Arms,' and her now anxious mother took many a weary journey with her to the London hospital.

But when the second pension day came round, Collins and his wife were still of the same mind, and though again the old companions rallied round them, their persuasions were of no avail.

A few days later Mrs. Collins went to see