

The Inglenook.

Bell's Story: Part II.

BY ANNA ROSS.

How Bell was Traited to Take a Covenant Hold in Prayer

When she had stood, with her "brow against the window pane, pleading, almost hopelessly, that God would keep His promise, and blot out all her sins, making her a new creature in Christ Jesus," she was feebly taking, though she did not know it, *covenant hold* upon God. For a promise welcomed, and taken back to God for fulfilment, is a covenant in His sight. But it was years after that before she saw with any distinctness the right God has given us to plead with Him on His honor for the things He has promised.

It was in early days of teaching that she had been much touched and encouraged in studying Psalm 143rd. Each clause in it seemed fitted to her own case. But it was from the first verse that the possibility of taking definite *covenant hold* shined out. "Hear my prayer, O Lord; *in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*"

"What bold words to take before God," these were her thoughts "Does David mean to imply that for God not to answer him would be unfaithfulness, would be positive unrighteousness?" At first it seemed wrong to think such a thought. But the plea was written out in the Bible, and a glimpse was then given of the glorious power of this *covenant hold*.

Very soon after, the same thought was given her again out of 1 John, 1:9. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "God is merciful to forgive," that had been her old idea. But John seemed to put it that it was *faithfulness* and *justice*, not mere mercy that was involved in it. And then a further blessed outlook was given for the first time.—"He is faithful and just to cleanse me as well as to forgive me." Bell was beginning to find out that God in His great salvation had undertaken to do much more for her and in her than she had ever imagined. She had always supposed that God was to do the forgiving, but that she was to do the cleansing pretty much herself. It was a new and surprising idea that she might lay that part also over upon her mighty Redeemer, and rest upon His faithfulness to accomplish it.

A bright glimpse of the New Covenant itself in its crowning promise was given her shortly after that.

Being as usual in a weary wrestle after a Christian life that was worthy of the name, she came one day upon Heb. 8, 10. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their heart, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." In a moment she saw the glorious fact that God has undertaken to do the *whole work* Himself, and of course He means what He says. The next moment her heart went up to Him in the response, "Do it, Lord, Do it in me. Do as thou hast said."

It was the covenant prayer, and it got the covenant answer. For weeks there seemed to be no limit to the spiritual supplies that kept pouring out of that verse. She had fallen unawares upon the veritable "pearl of great price," "the secret of the Lord," "the mystery that hath been hid from ages and

from generations." But as yet there was no intelligent apprehension of the thing received, and so she could not hold it. If anything is to be held and used in life it must be definite and have a name. Bell knew nothing yet about the New Covenant and its infinite privileges, yet was that brief interlude of New Covenant power a dawning of brighter days for her.

A memorable lesson on the covenant hold, or the business-like way of dealing with God's promises was given her during the first summer at her new "manse" home.

A young man called one morning very early, and wanted to see the master of the house. The information that he had not yet risen did not have the desired effect. He had important business, and could not call again.

When the minister made his appearance, it turned out that the young man was an agent who wanted to leave a comparatively worthless book that was to cost \$4.50.

The gentleman who had been so summarily roused from his slumbers looked a little perplexed as he turned the book over several times. Then he looked at the young stranger with a curious mixture of kindness, concern and amusement in his face and said,

"I know you have my name down for this book, but do you remember how you got it and on what condition it was given?"

The young man made no reply.

"You got it simply because you would not go away without it, and you got it with the distinct stipulation that, if I should be out of money when you brought it, I should be free."

No answer, only a downcast countenance.

"Now, I am out of money."

Still no answer.

Then the minister went on in a different tone, "But I'll tell you what I will do. Though you know I am free in the circumstances, still you have my name. If you leave me the book, and give me your address, I shall send you the money when it comes in."

How the youth's countenance beamed with satisfaction and surprise, while he expressed his pleasure at the arrangement. He handed his card, and was promptly bowing himself out, when the minister stopped him.

"Wait a little," he said, and taking up the Bible he asked, "Do you ever read this book?"

"Yes Sir, sometimes."

There was a light in the minister's eye as he went on—

"But only reading it will not do you any good. This book is full of promises to which the name of the living God is solemnly attached. But does the mere reading of a promise secure its fulfilment? If, instead of coming in to me with my promise this morning, you had taken out your order-book, and driven past my door reading my order with my name attached,—reading it over and over as you went along—would that have done you any good? You were not content with merely reading my promise this morning. You came in and asked me to fulfil it. And in that you acted sensibly. To have stopped short of that would not have been a business-like use of the power I gave you when I gave you my name."

"And see the result. Though you know I could have got honorably out of it, yet I

have such a regard for my own name, that I gave you what you wanted."

"Now do you see the power God has given us over Himself when He has given us His name! If a man will do much for the honor of his name, what shall we not expect from the God of everlasting truth and infinite resources?"

"Do not be content with merely reading over God's promises; but bring them back to Him who gave them in a business-like way, as you did mine to me this morning. Use the Bible in this way, and you will find it a mine of wealth and power. Good-bye," and he shook hands kindly with the young stranger.

Bell had listened with the deepest interest. She felt that the key thus distinctly put into her own hand was worth much more than the \$4.50 otherwise thrown away on that book, and she begrudged them no more. The power of bringing back the promise to the Promiser in a business-like way became clear as day. It was the covenant hold again. Now the covenant hold is simply the business like hold. This illustration helped her on toward a *working knowledge* of the truth that had been given her before. But still the New Covenant itself was unexplored territory.

One day her husband came and sat down where she was working and began to talk over with her the "terms of the New Covenant." His heart was evidently full with the richness of the subject, and his enthusiasm made a mark on her memory, but she did not at that time grasp anything definite. "Covenant hold" had become plain, but the New Covenant itself was still "unexplored territory." They were later lessons that brought her in contact with the "breadth and length and depth and height" of the New Covenant itself.

Aunt Nesbitt's Legacy.

"It is no use trying to work upon my feelings. I have done all I ever mean to do for you. You have been a trouble and disgrace to your family ever since you were a lad—and will be till you die! You can go, John James."

Aunt Nesbitt pointed to the door. Her hand blazed with diamonds which flashed in the sunshine. As she leaned back in her chair her stiff silk gown seemed to rustle with righteous wrath.

John James did not move. His pale blue eyes, weak and bleary, rested on the bejeweled hands of Aunt Nesbitt. He was a man of about forty; tall and loosely put together, with narrow chest and sloping shoulders. A man not built "to set on" in the world; and only by dint of great care and good fortune to escape hopeless failure. It was too evident that he had misused both. A cough shook him from time to time; and at each cough Aunt Nesbitt gave a little sniff, as who should say, "Oh, yes, I know the cough trick!" His clothes had weathered many a storm by land and sea, and he looked an oddly incongruous figure in the stately drawing-room, amid the yellow satin damask and costly *bric a brac*.

"I should not trouble you for long, Aunt Nesbitt," he said, after a pause, and without lifting his eyes from the gems on Aunt Nesbitt's fingers. His weak mouth quivered. "If you won't help me, there's only the work-house left; and to die there—"

"Fudge!" said Aunt Nesbitt, as she took up her discarded knitting and set the steel needles a-clicking truculently.

"The doctor on board told me I hadn't any lungs left, and that this climate would kill me in a month."