

Our Story.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

BY ANNE M. BARR, Author of "Jan Volder's Wife," "The Daughter of Five," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

"It was all planned five years ago, Maxwell," was the answer, "and my partner half-four was the man who put the thought into my head. So then he had the first right to his own idea."

"But Maxwell deplored his loss in the matter, and told his own lie so often that he soon heartily believed it; nor was it much later ere he began—even in Grizelda's presence—to blame his marriage for his business disappointment."

"I bought this place," he would say savagely, "that I might command a fine coast and build a summer resort, and start a lobster fishery, and I was such a fool as to let a pretty face and a contradictory old man hurry me into a marriage. I wonder how McNeil got hold of my idea! Did I tell you, Grizelda, that these were my intentions? I am sure I must have done so," and he looked at her in a way which she understood to be an order to confirm his insinuation.

But, greatly to her own surprise, she dared to disavow his assertion. "I never heard you speak of such a thing. Some years ago my father and Mr. Blair used to discuss the subject. I often heard them."

"Then why did you not tell me about it? He left the room in a rage, and Grizelda burned her face in her hands, and burst into passionate weeping."

CHAPTER VII.—A NEW SORROW.

WE are not driftwood on the waves; but like the ships that tempt us brave, our hearts upon their voyage stand. We utter no unheeded cry— "Where is my God?" Lo, He is nigh, And says, "Take, child, thy Father's hand." —LYNCH.

A few days before Christmas Grizelda had a daughter. The child only lived a few hours, and the mother lay for many weeks within the shadow of death. Indeed, on the anniversary of her marriage the Laird and Helen kept a sorrowful vigil at Blairgowrie. The young husband, white and silent, sat motionless by the fire. The Laird walked slowly up and down the room. A great love and pity was struggling with a mysterious coldness and anger in his heart—the one for his apparently dying child, the other for the impassive husband whose grief appeared to be easily borne. Helen was by her sister's side. "She had been there for many weeks, but she knew not that her watch had lasted two long days and nights until Grizelda came back, wan, weary, from the strange solitude in which it had been fighting for a return."

It was near nightfall of the grim winter day when the father and sister of the sick woman dared to turn homeward with a flicker of hope in their hearts. The Laird was silent. Helen could see that he was nursing a grief, made bitter by suspicions of wrong. She knew his heart by her own; and yet she could not offer comfort for a sorrow which neither of them chose to voice.

They brought its shadow with them into the castle. It followed McNeil to his new building; he could not lock it out of his room, and often as he put it down it climbed again into his topmost thought. Yet not even to God in his most private prayer would he speak of the trouble which he foresaw. He determined not to anticipate, to hope for the best, to mistrust his own judgment. But Helen confronted the grief, and retiring with it into that solitude which is the "presence of God," she sought there counsel and comfort.

For it was evident that Grizelda was an unhappy wife, perhaps, indeed, an unkindly-used one. The physicians had thought it well to forbid Maxwell the sick room. The servants' piteous looks and eager service needed no words to interpret them. My lady had become an object of commiseration in her own home. A year ago she had ruled there like a queen of love and beauty.

As the spring came back to earth Grizelda came back to health. Yet, old or young, in every great sickness we lose something that we never regain. Grizelda stood one morning looking mournfully in her mirror for a trace of a charm gone for ever. She had lost the dew of her youth in that burning fight for life—lost that nameless, indescribable atmosphere of young years untouched by sorrow and undimmed by tears.

And her heart sank, for she knew that she held Maxwell only by the lustre and brightness of her physical beauty. Her mental qualities he held in low estimation; he thought her a fool, and he did not scruple to tell her so; while the very purity of her morals and her lofty standard of right and wrong constantly irritated him. For Grizelda had been so rigidly trained that sin was always sin to her, her conscience never consented to it, even in her great disobedience the sting of it secretly wounded her love and darkened her happiest hours.

Helen watched her with tender solicitude. She went often to Blairgowrie, though she could easily feel that Maxwell disliked her visits. And with every

one he threw off some particle of the restraint due to her presence only, until one day his evil temper passed beyond his control. He talked at Grizelda instead of to her, he sneered at her health, he kicked her pet dog out of the room, he did his best to drive her either into the mistake of open revolt or the equal mistake of tears and complaints.

Helen was burning with anger, yet she watched her sister's behaviour with pride and approbation. Grizelda became calm as Maxwell lost his self-control. Though she felt personally every blow given to her favourite terrier, she knew that interference would be useless, and she made no attempt to interfere. She ignored the hard speeches she could not turn away with a polite question or remark. She did what so many hard-pressed women do: affected to think the particular and private faults of Maxwell were the faults of all his sex, and that she was only enduring the usual fate of all married women.

Even when he left the room she did not say a word against him. With a patience and pathos Helen had never conceived of as part of Grizelda's character, she turned the conversation upon her dress, her summer plans, the visits she had to make. "Let me show you the bonnet and mantle Walter brought me from London last week," she said. "He is so generous. I am sure the lace on them cost a great deal of money. And he is talking of taking me to Switzerland. He thinks the mountain air will give me back my roses. What do you think, Helen?" And Helen for very pity admired the garment, and affected to approve of the Swiss mountains. But oh, at the last, when they stood holding each other's hands, when they kissed each other silently, with eyes full of unshed tears, a complaint beyond all words was made, a sympathy beyond all words given.

Still, until Grizelda spoke, Helen felt she must be silent. She had no right to force confidence, no right to make her sister's private sorrow a subject of conversation. Indeed, she respected Grizelda's reticence, and sympathized with the womanly and wisely feeling which shrank from any discussion of her husband's conduct. Maxwell had, however, no conception of so delicate a feeling. He believed the sisters spent their interviews in discussing his faults. And he had no doubt that Helen faithfully carried his wife's complaints to her father. There were days in which the suspicion pleased him; days in which he was rude to Grizelda solely because he expected Helen to report his indignities to the Laird.

For the continual sight of prosperity in which he had no share irritated him more and more. He had really come to believe himself very greatly wronged by McNeil's enterprise. The busy clatter of Edinburgh, with its happy, prosperous looking fishers, the fine hotel, where carpenters, painters, and finishers of all kinds were now busy; the cheering sounds of human toil, well paid and full of contentment, the entire transformation of the lonely coast, filled him with envy.

He came home one day in a passion, and ordered Grizelda to be ready to leave Blairgowrie in a week. "But where are we going, Walter?" "Anywhere out of sight of this miserable wilderness. I wish I had never set foot in it. But we shall visit London first, so take all your fineries with you. It is not unlikely, also, that we shall never come back here. I am sick of the place, and will sell it if I can."

She did not answer the threat, for she scarcely believed it. Yet it made her sad and anxious, for there were many times when she felt grateful for the simple sense that her father and sister were not far off, and the gray turrets of her old home almost within sight.

As the day approached for her journey, she became very unhappy. A depression she was not able to account for weighed her down, a sense of uncertainty and wrong made her fearful. She went to bid her father and Helen good-bye with a heart heavy with unformed forebodings, and her father's manner unconsciously intensified the feeling. Never had he been so tender and so pitiful to her, and yet, withal, so silent and preoccupied. She wondered if he had heard anything of her trouble. She hoped he would not ask her any questions, for how could she resist his sympathy?—she would weep upon his breast; she would tell him all; perhaps—perhaps she might beg never more to leave his loving care.

And as yet she could not bear to contemplate such an alternative. Maxwell was still unreasonably dear to her. To be with him for the chance of a smile or a kind word was something. Besides, there was the social shame of a separation. And Grizelda was almost foolishly sensitive to public opinion; she could suffer in silence and solitude; she could not bear to think of strangers discussing her domestic life; she shrank even from their sympathy.

When the hour of parting came, McNeil roused himself. The mournful thoughtfulness of his mood disappeared, as a shadow might pass away. He watched Grizelda weeping in Helen's arms with a kind of angry pity, and then, taking her hand, he led her to his own room. She had not been in it since her bridal night. The thought of all that had passed since made her shiver and sigh. She looked with a piteous inquiry into her father's face when he put her gently into a chair and sat down beside her.

"I have been wondering, Grizelda, whether to speak or to keep silence. Have you anything to say to me, dear?"

"No—no—I think not, dear father." "Good girl! Keep your own counsel as long as it is possible. When you must speak, remember my ears are always open to your voice."

She clasped his hand tightly, but said not a word. "I will ask you no questions, Grizelda. I will only tell you something. It happened a week ago. I was walking home by the plantation; Kinross and I were together. Just at the north corner, before we turned it, we heard some cries of distress. They were not human, and yet singularly human-like."

Grizelda covered her face with her hands. "I know what they were! Oh, I know what they were! Morag! Poor Morag!"

"Just so. The beautiful, sensitive creature was tied to a tree, and Maxwell was lashing her. Her nostrils were flecked with a bloody foam. She was quivering and sobbing with a sense of outrage and pain, and when she saw me she called me by a whiny and entreating and irresistible as a child's cry. I went up to your husband, and said, 'What are you beating the mare so cruelly for, Maxwell?' He was livid with passion, and he answered, 'For my own pleasure. It is none of your business.' Then Kinross said some very strong words to him; and while I soothed the poor, trembling brute, Maxwell, brought to reason by the passion of Kinross, by his threats and reproaches, condescended to explain that Morag had attempted to bite him, and been disobedient both to his voice and his spur."

"Poor Morag! I have not seen her lately. She was my mare once." "Kinross forced Maxwell to sell her to him on the spot. He would have flogged Maxwell with his own whip if he had not done so. And Maxwell knows that Kinross cannot be trifled with. It was a terrible scene, my child; and during it my thoughts were continually with you. The man who could flog a gentle, proud, sensitive creature like Morag could strike a woman. Oh, Grizelda, when I think of this my blood boils!"

She rose and looked at him with brave eyes, though they were full of tears. "He durst not strike me, father." "If he did?" "I should know how to right myself." "Oh, Grizelda, be careful! I am so in the dark, child, I cannot advise you." "And I cannot make things plainer yet, father. I have not lost all hope. When he is away from here he will be a better man. If I should need a friend—"

"If you should need a friend, he went to his secretary, and took from a small parcel—"  
Here is £2,000 in Bank of England notes. They are easily negotiable. Tell no one that you possess them. And you have always me and Helen, and never forget, my dear one, 'The Friend above all others.'"  
His voice trembled, for Grizelda was sobbing on his breast. He let her head rest there for a few moments; he stroked her fair hair, soothed and caressed her as if she had been a little child, and then, with a kiss, bid her a long farewell.

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

LESSON VIII., May 26, 1889. JESUS BETRAYED. Mark xiv. 43-54. COMMIT VERSES 48-50. GOLDEN TEXT.—Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss.—Luke xxii. 48.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Through conflicts and trials to victory.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Mark xiv. 27-42. Th. Mark xiv. 43-54. W. Matt. xxvi. 47-55. Th. Luke xxii. 47-55. F. John xviii. 1-15. Sa. Ps. lv. 1-23. Su. Ps. ii. 1-12.

TIME.—Between one and three o'clock, Friday morning, April 7th, A.D. 30.

PLACE.—The garden of Gethsemane and the palace of Caiaphas.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—Matt. xxvi. 47-58; Luke xxii. 47-55; John xviii. 2-15.

CIRCUMSTANCES.—Jesus went out from the upper room where He had instituted His supper, and with His disciples came to the garden of Gethsemane, near the foot of the Mount of Olives. Here, between midnight and one o'clock, He endured the agony in the garden. He had just returned from the inner shades to His disciples near the gate, when our lesson opens.

46. Took Him: made Him prisoner. 47. One of them: Peter (John xviii. 10). 48. Servant: named Malchus. This act was likely to cause the disciples to be arrested as rebels, and to make Jesus Himself seem a rebel against Rome, and His kingdom a temporal kingdom. Jesus destroyed the evil effects by healing Malchus. 49. Scriptures fulfilled: (Is. xli. 9; Isaiah liii. 12; Zech. xiii. 7). 50. Forsook Him: all the disciples ran away. 51. Young man: thought to be Mark. Linen cloth the sindon, or outer garment. 52. Naked with only the under-robe on. 54. Palace the open courtyard of the palace of the high priest.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—The agony in the garden.—Judas—his character; the light against which he sinned; the cause of his fall; the result.—The circumstances of Christ's capture.—Peter's following afar off.

QUESTIONS. REVIEW.—What Christian ordinance did Jesus institute in our last lesson? In what place? At what time? INTRODUCTION.—Where did Jesus go when he left the upper room? Who went with him? What time of the night was it? SUBJECT.—CONFLICTS WITH THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

I. THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE.—What did Jesus do in the garden? How did He arrange His disciples? (vs. 32-35.) For what did Jesus pray? What shows the intensity of His agony? (Luke xxii. 44.) Why was He so sorrowful? How was His prayer answered? (Luke xxii. 43, John xviii. 11.)

II. THE TRAITOR AMONG THE DISCIPLES (vs. 43-46).—Who betrayed Jesus? Why was he called Iscariot? What was he among the disciples? (John xiii. 29) What bargain had Judas made with the Pharisees? (Matt. xxvi. 14-16.) What were his motives for betraying Jesus? (See John xii. 6.) Where did Judas find Jesus? By what token did he betray Him? What did Jesus say to him? (Luke xxii. 48) What pay did Judas get for his treachery? (Matt. xxvi. 15) How did Judas feel after the act was over? (Matt. xxvii. 3, 4) Was his sorrow true repentance? What was the difference between Judas' sin and Peter's? In what did their repentance differ? (Mark xii. 72; John xxi. 15-17.) Compare it with Esau's repentance. (Heb. xii. 16-17) What became of Judas? (Matt. xxvii. 4; Acts i. 18-25.)

Could Judas have been a useful person in the kingdom of Christ? Is there danger now of betraying Christ from the love of money? In what ways may people betray Jesus in these modern days? What proportion of disciples were hypocrites? Is there a greater proportion in the modern Church? Did the early Church succeed in spite of some bad members?

III. ROMAN SOLDIERS AND JEWISH RUFFIANS (vs. 44, 46).—Who accompanied Judas? How were they armed? Why did they need lanterns? Give the circumstances of the capture (John xviii. 3-8). The power and influence of the world were against Jesus. Were they successful? (v. 49.) Is wrong ever successful in the end?

IV. DESERTION OF HIS DISCIPLES (vs. 47-52).—What did the disciples ask Jesus as the soldiers began to lay hold on Him? (Luke xxii. 49) What did Peter do? (v. 47, John xviii. 10) Was this courageous? What evil might have grown out of the act? What did Jesus do for the wounded man? (Luke xxii. 51.) What did Jesus say to those who came to arrest Him? What did the disciples do? Give the story of one young man. What made the disciples forsake their Lord? In what ways do men now sometimes forsake Christ? Is this a great grief to Him? (Ps. lv. 6, 12-14, 20, 21.)

V. INJUSTICE IN A COURT OF JUSTICE (vs. 53, 54).—Where was Jesus taken first? (John xviii. 13.) Where next? (John xviii. 13, 14, 24.) What did Peter do? Who was with him? (John xviii. 15.) How do people now follow Jesus afar off? Would it have been wiser and safer for Peter to have kept close to Jesus?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. There were some bad church-members, even among Christ's own disciples. II. The cause of Christ may still be betrayed by a kiss. III. The Church is never to depend on carnal weapons—the sword, money, rank. IV. There is a wrong as well as a right zeal, and the wrong brings harm where it would do good. V. The world at times seems to conquer, and to have God's people in its power, but at these very times it is an instrument for advancing God's truth. VI. It is dangerous to follow Jesus afar off. (1) It leads into temptation; (2) It is away from the source of help and victory; (3) It leads to a fall, and to the bitterness of sorrow.—Peloubet.

CHRIST gives peace by healing the diseases of the soul. Instead of the wretched device of attempting to satisfy restless and unholy cravings, He expels them and brings in the new sources of joy. The world's false peace begins in delusion, goes on in sin and ends in perdition. Christ's peace begins in pardoning grace, goes on in quiet trust, and ends in glory.—T. L. Cuyler.

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