

tive, but authoritative because true, and only in so far as they commend themselves to the enlightened Christian consciousness.

Such an attitude towards the Bible is, however, incompatible with any dogmatic system professing to be based upon it. It destroys the foundation on which alone that is rendered possible. And the whole system of theology hitherto accepted by evangelical Protestants must therefore necessarily fall to pieces with such a change of front. This is clearly recognised and as fearlessly admitted. The old dogmas regarding the descent of man from Adam, his fall and the imputation of his guilt to all his posterity, with their consequent death in sin, their redemption in Christ, the new birth, and the eternal punishment and perdition of the wicked, it is asserted "no longer press on the minds and spirits of men like an incubus." "The whole of that latest development of theological scholasticism, the Dutch covenant theology, with its solemn bargainings between God and Adam, between God the Father and God the Son, they regard as a fashion as quaint and artificial as the Dutch landscape-gardening which along with it came into vogue in the British Islands."

Nor are the writers content with this general inference. Special doctrines, hitherto accepted as among "the things most surely believed" by evangelical Christians of all denominations, are handled with the same surprising freedom. A brief notice of the more important is however reserved.

BEAUTY'S DAUGHTERS.

(By the Author of "Phyllis," "Molly Bawn," "Airy Fairy Lilian," etc.)

CHAPTER V.

Seven long days have dawned and waned; August is a week older. Visions of yellow September, of partridges, and of good red setters haunt the brain. The last faint remembrance of summer has indeed departed, but mid-autumn asserts itself in all its glory: "*Le roi est mort; vive le roi!*"

In the library at the Towers both the clocks have carefully chimed four strokes each. As one begins precisely as the other finishes, the listener may be excused for wondering if it can be really eight o'clock. The day is drowsy and full of a calm serenity. All nature seems at rest; only the soft but hasty wind rustling through the distant firs—making them creak and groan as though they are tender spirits in mortal pain—makes itself heard.

The sunbeams are throwing flickering shadows through the trees; little touches of light, yellow as golden corn, are dashing madly here and there in very gayety of youth and joy, dancing on Flora's pale pink gown, enriching Kitty's hair, and, lingering softly in Gretchen's eyes, making those sweet homes of love blue as the skies above her.

There is a sense of languor and unspeakable rest in the whole air; every one feels inclined to smile and believe without asseveration in the amiability of his or her neighbour. The flowers lift up their heads; the grasses bend and rustle; above in the topmost branches of the trees even the "small fowle maken merrie."

Upon a lounge, close to the library window, the sash of which is lifted high as it can go, lies Kenneth Dugdale; while outside the younger members of the Tremaine family, with two or three guests sit upon garden chairs, and upon grass when chairs fail them.

Kitty, with delicately flushed cheeks and half-veiled eyes, is making a pretty pretence at work, with Sir John Blunden stretched at her feet; but I think she is netting more of his love into the tender mesh of her heart than gold beads into her embroidery.

Gretchen is not working at all: work and Gretchen are deadly foes; she lies in a little graceful attitude of utter *abandon* upon the sward, with daisies plucked in idle mood all round her, drinking in the beauties of the day; and near her, very near her, is a young man,—one of the Scarletts of Scarlett Mere, a devoted adherent of her majesty and Miss Gretchen's slave. Dugdale, watching in the open window near, marks how his eyes brighten, and his color deepens, and his whole face gains life and warmth when she smiles upon him, or when her hand by chance comes close to his, or when some kind little word meant exclusively for him reaches his ears.

Every now and then the group outside address a word or two to the invalid, "poor Dugdale," who, sitting apart from them, still amuses himself listening to the wise and silly and merry remarks that fall from them as time goes by. He had accepted the invitation to spend some weeks at the Towers, given by Mrs. Tremaine in person, with an alacrity, a willingness, that amazed himself, and now knows he has been happier during these past few days than he has been for months.

He is Gretchen's special charge. With her whole heart—the tenderest that ever felt for mortals—she pities him, and all day long devises little secret plans whereby he shall reap such comfort as may be gained from the knowledge that those around him are eager to do him good service. To be maimed, or miserable, or poverty-stricken, despised by the world, is the surest way to gain Gretchen's sweetest smiles and tenderest glances and most honeyed words. And already Dugdale has learned to listen impatiently for her coming, to distinguish her step among a thousand, to read with unerring accuracy each change in her expressive countenance. To him the pleasantest hours in all the twenty-four are those in which she brings her books and her gentle presence to his side, and, drawing a chair to his couch, reads to him in her low sweet voice, that most "excellent thing in woman."

Just now she raises her head and sends to him a smile soft and frank and full of good fellowship, that raises envy in the breast of Scarlett, who would have all her smiles and every thought of her heart his own.

"How good you are to that fellow Dugdale!" he says, begrudgingly; and Gretchen answers with mild reproach,—

"Remember how sad it is for him; how different he is from you and me,

who can go about, enjoying the sun, and the flowers, and all there is of the best."

"Well, of course it is hard on him," says Scarlett, growing repentant, "not to be able to walk, you know, and that. I certainly shouldn't like to be a cripple, you know; should you?"

Which answer vexes Gretchen more than she would like to acknowledge.

"He is not a cripple," she says, coldly, in the tone that usually reduces Scarlett to despair. He is not in his happiest mood to-day. And Flora, without knowing it, is doing her utmost to aggravate him to madness by persistently keeping as close to Gretchen as circumstances will permit.

It is, indeed, with rapture he hails the approach of Brandy, who comes leisurely towards them across the lawn. He is not alone; the past week has given to the towers two new guests, Kenneth Dugdale and Mr. Dinmont, a friend of Brandy's, and indeed, from old associations' sake, a friend of all the Tremaines.

He is young—disgracefully young, he tells himself,—though not so boyish in appearance as Brandy. Indeed, he might be any age within the twenties, though only twenty-two. There is a solemnity about Mr. Dinmont, an amount of carefulness both in manner and in speech, that does honour to his "head and heart," considering he is rich and well-born, and without that "creeping horror," a guardian.

History declares he might have been even more endowed with worldly goods but for a fatal tendency towards practical joking, that, being put into practice in his fifteenth year, lost him many thousands. The thousands were his aunt's, the practical joke was quite his own.

Miss Jemima Dinmont was an elderly spinster of severe morals and small wit. Nowadays they say it is impossible to swear positively to any one's morals; but that Miss Jemima's common sense was of a low order I think there be little doubt, when she expressed a desire to escort George Dinmont—then a lad—home from Eton.

Miss Jemima seldom made mistakes, but this was a mistake difficult to cap, as I believe few people knowing George Dinmont at that time would have elected to go on a journey with him. But Jemima probably thought herself beyond fear. Afterwards all the Dinmonts were glad to remember that it was she herself who had proposed the journey, that no one had incited her to it or painted the expedition in glowing colours.

Miss Jemima met young George at the station, and, having saluted him and bought his ticket, they started on their ill-fated way towards home. At first Miss Jemima was genial and George—who was nothing if not facetious—presently broke into a strain of reminiscences amusing, if not of a highly spiritual nature, that let her into a thing or two about school-boy life.

Perhaps these recollections were of a lively rather than an edifying description, because after a while Miss Jemima froze palpably; whereon young George found himself, as he afterwards expressed it, "in the wrong box." Silence ensued, and both turned their attention upon the flying landscape.

So far things had gone unusually well, and might have ended with a mere reprimand on one side and some disgust on the other, had not Miss Jemima chosen this moment of all others to commit her crowning act of folly: she fell asleep!

When the Dinmonts heard this latter on, they shook their heads dismally and asked each other solemnly, "What could she have expected?"

Yes, she fell asleep, and time began to hang heavy on young George's hands. He yawned, he fidgeted; he cut a large hole in the new cloth cushions of the carriage; he scratched his name upon the door; he worried the tassel off the end of the piece of leather that helps to open the windows, and, in fact, did all that could possibly be expected of him in the course of ten short minutes.

Then he looked at Miss Jemima. She was sweetly sleeping. Her lips were apart; her head was thrown slightly backwards. A gentle snore proclaimed her in the arms of Morpheus. Her nephew sat for some time lost in admiration of this enchanting picture, and then—and then—he caught sight of the down upon her upper lip!

It was enough. Quick as lightning he drew from his pocket a piece of twine, three penknives, several apples, a few nails, a little box of matches, and a cork.

Cautiously he lit a match and applied it to the cork; the latter, as though in rich enjoyment of the situation, burned bravely and soon was black as could be desired. Then came the last act in the drama: George rose on tiptoe and applied the cork generously to Miss Jemima's lip. The down took it kindly, and soon developed as fine a mustache as any young *attaché* might be proud of.

George, gazing at her in silent ecstasy, laid his hands upon his knees and bent almost in two in his violent efforts to restrain his unholy joy; whilst Miss Jemima slumbered on in blissful unconsciousness.

"And you never," said young George to an admiring audience later on, "saw such an upper lip for the purpose!"

Not yet altogether content with his work, this dutiful nephew next ornamented his sleepy aunt with bushy whiskers, and, as a delicate compliment to the present government, made her a present of a charming "imperial." He might, perhaps, have added a touch or two to her brows or the tip of her nose, but that just then a shrill whistle warned him his time was short; and Aunt Jemima, waking, with a final snort, declared "she never could sleep in those shaky trains," and told him his journey was almost at an end.

Then they steamed into the station, and George, bidding her a hasty farewell—without trusting himself to look at her again,—sprang to the ground and fought his way through idlers and passengers, out of sight.

Miss Jemima descended slowly to the platform and summoned a porter to see to her luggage. The man came, saw, and was conquered. He put his hand to his mouth, and, with a choking sound fled! Several men did the same; until at length Miss Jemima found herself marching across the station through a delighted crowd nearly divided into two rows, who gave her as she reached the place of exit a parting cheer.

Her own footman, as he opened her carriage-door, grew first pale with fright, and then subsided into agonies of suppressed laughter, whilst the coachman on the box declared afterwards he was never so near apoplexy in his life.