

## THE DAYS OF WESLEY.

## XII.

"WELL, children," said Uncle Beauchamp, when we returned, smiling as he caught Evelyn's triumphant glance, "safe out of the lion's den at all events! I thought Kitty was to have brought the lion himself in chains of roses, like a fairy queen she is. But she looks as if she had suffered in the encounter," he said, kissing my cheek, which was wet with tears.

"Kitty is only half pleased," said Evelyn. "She scarcely knows whether to rejoice about Jack or to weep over the wickedness of human nature in the person of Mr. Postlethwaite whereas I, on the other hand, having a hard and impenetrable heart, scarcely know whether to be most pleased that Cousin Jack is safe, or that Mr. Postlethwaite is not safe. I always have thought it one of the most delightful prospects held out to us in the Psalms, that the wicked are to be taken in their own net. But to draw the net tight with my own hands was a luxury to which I scarcely dared to aspire."

Then she narrated the interview. Uncle Beauchamp assured father and me that all would be right; and I was permitted to go at once to Jack, and tell him all we had accomplished.

Jack was very thankful, and most gentle and affectionate to me; but he said,—

"Don't think me the most ungrateful fellow in the world, Kitty; but I am not sure really, after all, whether it wouldn't have been easier on the whole to have been sent to the colonies, or even put out of the way altogether, than to have to meet every one, and to feel, as I do, that I have been the most selfish, cowardly dog in the world, all the while I thought myself a fine, open-hearted, generous fellow; and," he added, in a lower voice, "I'm not sure that *that* isn't easier than to have to look at one's self as I have had to for these last few hours. It's a terrible thing, Kitty, to be disgraced in your own eyes."

"Don't talk so, Jack," I said. "Say what you will to yourself and to God, but not to me. It will do you no good, and I cannot bear it. You don't know, Jack, how good and noble you may be yet," I said, and I put my arm within his, and looked in his face, and said, "I should feel proud to walk with you, Jack, now, through London, in that very dress. The people might say what they would, but I shouldn't mind a bit, for I should feel 'that is my brother, who would rather die than swear to a lie.'"

"It's a brave little Kitty," he said, in rather a husky voice. "But hush, Kitty, hush!" he added hastily, "don't lift me up on my fool's pedestal again."

But as I went away he called me back, and said softly,—

"You have hope of me, Kitty; don't

give it up, don't. And try to make father and mother have hope of me. It does me good to think you have, for God knows I have little myself."

The next day father and I went to him together; but that interview I cannot describe, because I never can think of it without crying, much less write. How father begged Jack's pardon, and Jack father's; and they both fell into weeping. It is such an overwhelming thing to see men, like father and Jack, hopelessly break down and cry like children.

To women. I think tears are a natural, easy overflowing of sorrow; but from men they seem wrung as if every drop were almost bled in anguish from the depths of the heart. With us tears are a comfort; to men they seem an agony.

But Evelyn was right. In a few days the Original Peruvian Mining Company's splendid offices were to let, and Elias Postlethwaite, Esq., was nowhere to be found.

And the prosecutor having come to nothing, of course the prosecution came to nothing too.

But that was not the chief joy—not by any means the chief joy to me, great as it was.

The day after I had told Jack the effect of our interview with the Secretary, I was permitted to sit with him some time in his cell. At first I talked to him about home, but I thought he seemed absent, and after a little while he said abruptly,—

"Kitty, I had a very strange visitor yesterday evening after you left—an old sailor called Silas Told—who, it seems, finds his way into all the prisons and to the hearts of the prisoners, in a very remarkable way. He was a sailor in his youth, and a very bad fellow from his own account; involved in all kinds of horrors in kidnapping blacks from the African coast. At last he grew tired of this wild life, and settled down to business in London, and married. Not long after this, a poor workman got him and his wife to go and hear Mr. Wesley at the Foundry. They were not convinced in a moment; but before long everything was thoroughly changed with them. They found great happiness in religion; and after a time he gave up his business to teach poor outcast children at a school in connection with Mr. Wesley's meeting-house at the Foundry, at a salary of ten shillings a week. For seven years he worked from morning till night for these destitute boys. He trained three hundred of them, teaching them to read and write, and fitting them for all kinds of trades. But one morning, when he and his boys were attending Mr. Wesley's five o'clock morning preaching, the text was, 'I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.' The reproach pierced his heart, he said, as if our Lord had looked sorrowfully at him while he spoke the words. For some days he was wretched; and from that time he has made it his

work to visit every cell in every prison to which he can find admittance. He has gone in the cart to the gallows with criminals, praying for them all the way. He has brought joy—absolute joy—with the news of God's mercy, into condemned cells. He has made the most hardened criminals weep in an agony of sorrow for their sins—such an agony, Kitty, that afterwards, when they were able to believe God had forgiven them their sins, it seemed nothing to go to the gallows. And what seems more wonderful still—(this the jailer told me)—sheriffs, hangmen, and turnkeys have been seen weeping, as he exhorted or comforted the prisoners. The authorities, civil and ecclesiastical, have tried again and again to keep him out of the prisons, but he will not be kept out; and so yesterday evening, Kitty, he found his way to me."

I said nothing, but waited for him to go on. After a little pause he continued,—

"He found his way to me, and when I am free—if ever I am—I will find my way to him, for he prayed with me, and prayer like that I never thought there could be. He prayed as if he saw my heart and saw our Saviour. I shall never forget it—I trust I shall never forget it. What the words were I am sure I cannot tell. They did not seem like words, so fervent, so sure, so reverent, so imploring, so earnest, it seemed as if he would have stormed Heaven; and yet all the time the great power of them seemed to be that he felt God was on our side, *willing* to give, *delighting* to give, stretching out His hands to give!"

"You had told him something of yourself," I said, when he had been silent a little while.

"I don't know what I told him, Kitty, or what he found out; I only know I intended at first to tell him nothing. I thought he was going to treat me as one case among a thousand of spiritual disease. But he came to me like a friend, like a brother; so full of pity, there was no standing it; and before he left I was telling him what was in my inmost heart."

"And it has done you good, Jack!" I said.

"It has opened a new world to me," he said. "It has made me see that what you and father felt for me in my sin and trouble, God felt infinitely more. He has been *grieved* at my doing wrong, because sin is the worst misery, and His one desire and purpose is to lift me out of it up to Himself. And He will do it, Kitty; I do believe He will do it."

It was some days before the formalities about Jack's liberation could be arranged, and very precious days they were to him. Silas Told saw him often, patiently encountering his variable tempers, and meeting his shifting difficulties, for at first Jack had many difficulties, and occasionally, I must confess, he was in an irritable state that did not always contrast favour-

ably with his old complacent equanimity. He often reminded me of a sick child waking up with a vague sense of hunger and discomfort which it could only express by fretting. But the great fact remained: he was no longer asleep, his whole being was awake. At one time he would defend himself captiously against his own previous self-accusations; at another he would bitterly declare that all hope of better days for him was an idle dream,—he had fallen, not perhaps beyond hope of forgiveness hereafter, but quite beyond all hope of restoration to any life worth living here. Yet although often, when I seemed to leave him on the shore, I found him again tossed back among the breakers, and buffeted by them hither and thither; nevertheless, on the whole, there was advance. There was a steadily growing conviction of his own moral weakness, and a steadily growing confidence in the forgiveness and the strengthening power of God, until on the day when he came out, when he and I were alone in the study in Great Ormond Street, he said,—

"It is the beginning with forgiveness, Kitty, that makes all the difference! Easy forgiveness, indeed, may make us think lightly of doing wrong; but God's is no easy forgiveness. The sacrifice which makes it easy for us was God's. It is pardon proclaimed with the dying words of the Son of God, and sealed with His blood. It is wonderful joy to know that God does not hate us on account of our sins; but I think it is almost greater joy to know that He hates our sins for our sakes, and will not let our sins alone, but will help and encourage us,—yes, and make us suffer anything to conquer them, and to become just, and true, and unselfish."

Many outside difficulties remained. It seemed difficult to find any career open to Jack. He was ready to try anything and to bear any humiliation; but the suspicions and distrust which doing wrong necessarily bring on people are a cold atmosphere for anything good to grow in. If he smiled, for instance, Aunt Henderson was apt to think him impenitent. If he was grave, Uncle Beauchamp was disposed to consider him sullen. It is so terribly difficult for any one who has fallen openly to rise again. If he stands upright and looks up, some people call him shameless; if he stoops and looks down, others call him base. At first we thought of home and the old farm-life; but much as I should have liked to have him with us again, I could not help seeing, with some pain, that although Jack made not an objection, and endeavoured to enter into it, the thought evidently depressed him.

One morning, while father and I were debating these matters, to our amazement the footman quietly ushered in "Mr. Spencer."

Hugh had that day arrived from America. Father left me to tell him all the sad yet hopeful history of the