

Our Story.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

BY ANGELA B. BARR. Author of "Jan Voller's Wife," "The Daughter of Fifa," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V. — GRIZELDA'S MARRIAGE.

We, ignorant of ourselves, beg often our own harm, which the wise perceive.

Deny us for our good. SHAKESPEARE. As we are, so we see. EMERSON.

Our deeds determine us, as we determine our deeds. G. ELIOT.

The highest freedom lies in the bonds of duty. DOWNER.

The journey home was most unhappy. The Laird did not speak to his refractory daughter, and she did not appear to regret a circumstance which gave her the opportunity of feeding her heart upon her own thoughts and dreams.

The weather was stormy, the roads heavy and disagreeable, and no one except Grizelda had any equivalent for the altogether wretched and useless journey.

To her it had proved her lover's faithfulness. She felt all the triumph of the pursuit, and she found a sufficient pleasure in affecting sleep, and mentally reviewing the fond words he had said and the delightful plans for the future which they had imagined.

But at length the wearisome trial was over. McNeill crossed his doorstone again, and looked up at the declaration above it with a heart full of gratitude.

The old rooms were glowing with fire-light, and bright with every kind of comfort. Colin was at hand full of joy and congratulation, the servants were eager for a word from him, the shepherds, the fishers, the village children, all tried to make him understand how welcome to his own home and to his own people he was.

And it was very pleasant to see Helen's delight also, to watch her going through the rooms, and ordering the table and re-arranging their lives. Colin followed her up and down, and was restless if the Laird detained him.

He had discovered in her absence how lonely his heart, how desolate his home, was without her. He felt that a passive admiration would no longer suffice; and he had met her with words that sent a wave of colour over her cheeks and filled her eyes with a new and sudden light.

The Laird noticed very soon how constantly Colin was at her side, how readily his voice fell into softer tones when he spoke to her, how frequently he found opportunities of bending his dark, handsome head until he could almost have kissed the paler glory of her golden-brown hair.

It pleased and it pained him. He was willing to give Helen to Colin, but not to her. "Not just yet," he kept saying to his heart.

On the evening Dr. Brodick called, and the two men went together into the Laird's parlour. "Well, old friend," said the minister, "have you brought good news with you?"

"It has been a most unlucky journey, doctor. The man followed us. She has been meeting him secretly every day."

"Why did you give her any opportunity?"

"She said she was sick. She lay upon the sofa constantly, and it was not likely I could shut Helen up night and day with her. There are McNeils in Edinburgh, and other friends and kin, and we had to see them or give them an offence not to be pardoned in this generation. If the girl was too sick to dine and visit with her own people, how could I suspect she would be walking about the streets with her lover?"

"Man, you are na up to women-folk. I'm feared you did not take proper care of her."

"Did you ever try to guide a love-sick girl yourself, doctor? If you have not you know nothing about it. For perfect unreasonableness, for selfishness and deception, they can beat the big devil himself. What will I do now?"

"I'll tell you, Laird. Deal openly with her. Don't give her a chance to deceive you. Take away from her every excuse for indulging herself in any romancing folly. Ask her if she is determined to marry Maxwell. If she says she is, let the man come here and see her. The best half of such love affairs as this is contradiction. If Maxwell means all he has said, give your permission to what will be otherwise taken without your permission. Of course, Maxwell would rather you refused him; he would like you to order him from your presence; but I advise you to disappoint him. For Grizelda's sake give him at least a bare civility."

"I cannot do it, doctor! I cannot! I cannot do it!"

"Think a bit, McNeill. Look at the very worst side of the man. He is a murderer, or a thief, or an out-and-out blackguard, that we know of. He is well born, he has an estate in Gallo way, beside Blairgowrie. He is made welcome at many a grand house, and rides and hunts with the best men in the neighbourhood. And he goes regularly to kirk, so that if he is not good, he is at least in the way of getting good."

"If he is not good! When Kilmorey's shepherd told him about his dogs tearing the sheep on the mountains he went off into a fit of outrageous laughter. When Greenlees sent him word,

he cursed the messenger, and wished the dogs had torn the men to pieces as well as the sheep! He never attempted to restrain them until my false daughter betrayed my threat to him. The man has a brute's nature—I'm feared I am slandering the poor brutes—he is naturally cruel—he has a stone instead of a heart."

"But if Grizelda thinks differently, what then?"

"If Grizelda is determined to make her bed in hell, and will neither listen to advice nor entreaties, she must even do so."

"Try, for her sake, to conquer your dislike of Maxwell, Laird."

"The feeling is beyond me, doctor. When I can drink poison and it not harm me, I can sit with Maxwell and not feel it to be an insult and an offence. The hatred of him is back of here. My soul is acquainted with his soul, and when my soul says to me, 'The man is a villain,' I know he is one. I don't mind if he drank the holy cup every Sunday, I would know it all the same. You think this is pure prejudice, doctor."

"True McNeill; but what we call 'prejudice' is often only a veiled truth, subtly adapted to the nature that holds it; too fine, too complicated, too delicate for argument and definition. Have you told Grizelda of these impressions?"

"To be sure I have. She only smiled and said 'it was a pity I had so much of the melancholy, superstitious nature of the Celt in me.' As if I could have too much of the Celt in me! She is set upon going her own bad way."

"Well, then, McNeill, you must trust God to bring good out of bad. Neither of us can do it, for the root of Grizelda's disobedience and folly is selfishness, and the sin of selfishness is 'the old serpent that deceiveth the whole world.'"

"Oh! doctor, I know now how David felt when he cried out, 'It was thou, mine own familiar friend! It is my child! Oh, Grizelda! Grizelda!'"

"Consider, Laird, if one heart has been faithful to you, there are other hearts around you full of valiant tendernesses, hearts that know how to love. The earth might quake, the heavens melt, you would still find them true. And though Grizelda's affection has been alienated from you, I do not believe that any one will have the power to destroy the grand principles of morality on which I have helped you to build up her life. And mind this, Laird, the one real, intolerable household ruin is not that which separates, but that which corrupts. If vice has not withered the soul of the child, the parent may still say, 'Thank God! But I must away now, Laird, for I have a night-school to teach at eight o'clock; and the lady and ladies would be sadly disappointed if I was not on hand.'"

"A night-school! What a perfect nonsense! Selwyn's order, is it?"

"Selwyn's order, if it pleases you to call it so."

"It does not please me, doctor, and I don't think anybody will approve of the kirk being used for the like of it. It is a kind of desecration—that is my opinion."

"I remembered that feeling, Laird, and respected it. The school is in my ain house; Kirsty is tossing her head about it, but she will have to thole the barns until I get a school-house built."

"And where will you get the siller for it?"

"I am not just destitute of siller myself; and I am looking for help from divers, and for land from you."

"I will not give you enough to set your feet together on, doctor, for such a purpose."

"Ay, well, I am not asking you tonight. When you come to your best self, Laird, we will speak about it. God be with you."

(To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS. LESSON IV, April 28, 1889. DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD. Mark xiii. 1-13. COMMIT VERSES 1, 2. GOLDEN TEXT.—But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.—Matt. xii. 6. CENTRAL TRUTH.

Christ's coming is the overthrow of those who hate Him, but the joy of those who love Him.

DAILY READINGS. M. Mark xii. 34-44. P. Mark xiii. 1-23. F. Luke xxi. 1-22. S. Ps. xci. 1-16. S. Acts ii. 14-21.

TIME.—Late Tuesday afternoon, April 4, A.D. 30. PLACE.—(1) The temple at Jerusalem. (2) Mount of Olives.

INTERVENING EVENTS.—Jesus asks the Jews a question (Mark xii. 35-40). He teaches a lesson from the widow's mite (Mark xii. 41-44). Certain Greeks desire to see Jesus (John xii. 20-26). A voice from heaven (John xii. 27-36). Jesus then leaves the temple as noted in to-day's lesson, and never entered it again.

CORRESPONDING ACCOUNTS.—Matt. xxiv. 1-14, Luke xxi. 5-19.

HELPS UPON HARD PLACES.—1. What stones? Some of them were 13 feet long, 14 high, and 21 broad. What buildings? Herod's temple was a building of great magnificence, covering, with outbuildings, 19 acres. It was of white marble, with golden roofs and pinnacles. 2. Not one stone upon another; fulfilled to the letter in A. D. 70, when the Romans, under Titus, destroyed Jerusalem. 4. What shall be the sign, etc.: Matthew (xxiv. 3) gives this question more fully, as applied to His coming, and the end of the world.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.—This was one coming, including the whole Christian dispensation, but it was threefold. (1) At the destruction of Jerusalem, when the old dispensation of Judaism ended, and Christianity was firmly established. The coming was promised to take place during the lifetime of some of the disciples (Mark ix. 1; Matt. xvi. 27, 28; Luke xii. 26, 27). This was a real personal coming. (2) There will be a similar, more complete coming when the world shall be converted to Jesus, and his kingdom come. This, too, is a real personal coming to which all the "signs" given in this lesson apply. (3) A coming at the day of judgment (Matt. xxv; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18).

6. Many in my name: great numbers in the next 40 years pretended to be the Messiah. 8. Nation against nation: Palestine soon after this was full of wars, and the Roman Empire was full of disturbances. Earthquakes: there were several in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, A. D. 40-68; five of great severity. Famines: there were four under Claudius. (See Acts xi. 28) 9. For a testimony, not against, but unto, them. By these the Gospel would be made known. 10. Gospel... among all nations: this was true before the destruction of Jerusalem. (See Rom. i. 8, written A. D. 58; Col. i. 6, 23, written A. D. 62.) 13. Saved every Christian heading Christ's warning, escaped from Jerusalem, and not one was among the 1,100,000 who perished there.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—The stones of the temple.—The destruction of Jerusalem.—The second coming of Christ.—The signs of the coming as given in this lesson.—The various duties in view of it here enjoined.

QUESTIONS. REVIEW.—What question did Jesus answer in our last lesson? What are the two great commandments? INTRODUCTION.—What question did Jesus then ask the Jews? (Mark xii. 35-37.) What lesson did he teach from the gift of a poor widow? (Mark xii. 41-44.) Who came at this time to see Jesus? (John xii. 20-23.) What testimony did God give in approval of Jesus? (John xii. 28.)

SUBJECT: THE COMING AGAIN OF OUR LORD. I. THE PROPHECY. (vs. 1, 2.) To what did the disciples call Jesus' attention as they left the temple? What can you tell about the appearance of Jerusalem and the temple at this time? What about the great stones referred to? What did Jesus foretell about them? When and how was it fulfilled? II. SIGNS OF JESUS' COMING. (vs. 3-10.) Where did Jesus go next? Who asked him some questions? What were they? How are they given in Matt. xxiv. 3? What is meant by Christ's coming again? When did he say this coming should take place? (Mark ix. 1; Matt. xvi. 27, 28; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17.)

What was the first sign? (v. 6) What was the second? (vs. 7, 8.) What was the third? (v. 8, middle clause.) What was the fourth sign? (v. 9.) Did all these things take place before the destruction of Jerusalem? What was the fifth sign? (v. 10.) Was the Gospel preached in all the world before Jerusalem was destroyed? (Rom. i. 8; Col. i. 6-23.) What do we mean when we pray "Thy kingdom come"? Are all the above signs appearing now? Should we look forward with joy to Christ's coming in his kingdom? III. DUTIES IN VIEW OF THE COMING. (vs. 11-13.) What is the first duty? How can we avoid being deceived? What is the second duty? (v. 9, f. c.) What is the third duty? (v. 10.) What is the fourth duty? Where is this promise repeated? (John xvi. 13.) Does this forbid all forethought, or only anxiety? What should they give their mind to? (v. 10.) What trouble would arise in families? (v. 12.) Why? What is the fifth duty? (v. 13.) What became of the Christians at the destruction of Jerusalem? (See Helps, v. 13.) Will all be saved at last who endure to the end? What helps have we to enable us to hold on?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. I. Spiritual things endure, temporal things perish. II. All that Jesus promises or threatens will be accomplished. III. Take great care not to be deceived. IV. There must be great upheavals and commotions before the good can subdue the evil. V. Persecutions and opposition call attention to the Gospel truths. VI. We must preach the Gospel in all the world. VII. Perseverance in the Christian life is the proof that we are Christians.—Psalms.

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