

BARRIERS BURNED AWAY.

By Rev. E. P. Roe.

(Continued.)

"If instead of going forward to all this delight, I become an object of terror and loathing even before I die, and something that must be hidden out of sight as soon as possible after, what conceivable fate could be worse? That such a thing is possible, proves this to be a dreadful and defective world, with all its sources of pleasure. Surely if there were a God he would banish such horrible evils.

"There is no God—there can't be any, at least none such as the Bible reveals. How often I have said this to myself. How often my father has said it to me; and yet the thought of Him torments me often even when well.

"Why does this thought come so persistently now? I settled it long ago, under father's proof, that I did not believe in Him or the superstitions connected with His name. Why don't the question stay settled? Other superstitions do not trouble me. Why should that Cross continually haunt me? Why should the *man* who died thereon have the power to be continually speaking to me through His Words that I have read. I believe in Socrates as much as I do in Him, and yet I recall the Greek sage's words with an effort, and cannot escape from the Nazarene's. All is mystery and chaos and danger. We human creatures are like frothy bubbles that glisten and dance for a moment on a swift black tide that seems flowing forever, and yet nowhere."

Then her thoughts recurred to Dennis.

"That young Fleet seemed to believe implicitly in what he said yesterday, and he lives up to what he believes. I would give the world for his delusion, were it only for its comforting and sustaining power for this life. If he were very sick, he would be imagining himself on the threshold of some sort of heaven or paradise, and would be calm, and perhaps even happy, where I am so supremely wretched. I find that I have nothing—absolutely nothing to sustain me—not even the memory of good deeds. I have not even lived the unselfish life that Socrates recommends, much less the holy life of the Bible.

"I have *pleased myself*. Well, believing as I have been taught, that seemed the most

sensible course. Why doesn't it seem so now?"

Thus tossed on a sea of uncertainty and fear, Christine, in darkness and weakness, grappled with those mighty questions which only He can put to rest who said—

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God; believe also in Me."

Dennis walked resolutely home. He felt himself adamant in his stern resolution. He at least had the death-like peace that follows decision; the agony of conflict was over for a time; and, as he thought, forever.

From mere exhaustion he slept heavily, and on the following day with white face and compressed lips entered on his work. And work it truly now became; for the old glamour was all gone, and life looked as practical and hard as the stones of the street. Even the pictures on the walls seemed to him but things for sale, representing money values, and money appeared the beginning, middle, and ending of the world's creed. Like the unsubstantial mirage had vanished the beautiful, happy life of the past few weeks. Around him were the rocks and sands of the desert, through which he must toil with weary bleeding feet till he reached the land watered by the river of life. Reason and duty, as he believed, forbade the existence of this foolish passion, and he must and would destroy it, but in his anguish he felt as if he had resolved to torture himself to death.

"And she will never know what I suffer—never know the wealth of heart I have lavished upon her. I am glad she will not, for the knowledge of my love would make no more impression on her cold, proud nature than a drop of warm summer rain falling on the brow of yonder marble statue of Diana. She would only be amazed at my presumption. She feels that she shines down on me, like the sun, and that I am a poor little satellite that she could blot out altogether by causing her father to turn me out into the street again, which undoubtedly would be done should I reveal my feelings."

And he was right.

"Come!" said he to himself, breaking