

A LITTLE SUNBEAM.

A little sunbeam in the sky Said to itself one day "I'm very small, but why should I Do nothing else but play? I'll go down to the earth and see If there is any use for me."

Selected Serial.

HOW THEY KEPT THE FAITH.

A Tale of the Huguenots of Languedoc.

BY GRACE KAYWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

"What you tell me about my mother, Nannette?"

"I was a childish voice, clear and sweet as the tinkling of a brook on the hillside, that asked the question, and the face, upturned in the ruddy glare of the wide hearth, was winsome as a flower."

"I remember every word, dear old Nannette; but that is not like hearing you tell it. M. La Roche is in the sitting room with my aunt, and will not go away until my uncle gets back from the customary meeting."

"You mind well there is nothing I like so much to tell," answered the woman, tapping her work for a moment to pat the child's cheek with a trembling hand.

"I recall the visit to my grandfather very well, but I have forgotten the shops. Please go on, Nannette, and tell me about my mother. I look like her."

"You are not that ill to look upon, little one; you have found out far too early for your good, but it is the beauty of your father's lineage; you have not your mother's face. Her eyes were blue and soft, like the velvet panicles that she loved, or the summer sky at noon; while yours are dark, and flash like stars on a sunny night."

"I would have thought so if you could have seen her tripping to church by her father's side, with the young gallants of Nismes waiting to see her pass. But beauty is vain, Mistress Eglantine; I wish I could write that on your memory with a diamond pen. Fair looks did not save your mother's eyes from tears, nor her heart from aching. There were more than a score of gentlemen ready to cross swords for a glance from her sunny eyes, but on none of them would she smile, not even on the rich young merchant whom her father had chosen for her husband."

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bedside, all dressed for a journey, and told me that she was going to leave her father's mansion to go to the convent, and that she never could be happy with any other, and then with tears and kisses, and soft arms about my neck, prayed me to go with her. I would have been false to the promise I gave her mother if I had let her go alone, so I dressed and went with them, though not without heavy misgivings, I will own, and saw them married at the priest's house—for your father was a Catholic—and was well on the road to Bern with them the next morning before those behind us had found it out."

"It nearly broke his heart, little one, for he had loved my lady as the apple of his eye, and he would not believe but that Captain Bertrand had cared more for the dowry than for the wife he had won. He sent back every letter my lady wrote him, unopened, until her husband would let her write no more. That was the only shadow on her happiness at first. Thou art like thy father, Mistress Eglantine, with thy sunny temper, and thy hot way of loving. Whatever swayed my lady had afterward to pay for her willfulness, she was at least not disappointed in him. He thought nothing too good for her, and it was not long before, to please him, she gave up going to her own convent, and went to his. From that moment my lady's heart misgave me."

"I do think of it, Nannette—only the captain's name is missing. Please go on; tell me how you watched through the hedge until they heard me cry, and came out into the porch, and how I saw the first to enter the basket, and how my aunt took me up in her arms and kissed me, and how Uncle Geoffrey said God had given me, in place of the little daughter he had lost, and how they called me Eglantine, because the vine was in blossom on the porch."

"I would mind that part of the story well enough yourself, Mistress Eglantine; it was more than one year ago that I thought it was about your mother you wished to hear."

"Indeed it is," peeping round to print a kiss on the averted face. "I will be good, and ask no more questions if you will tell the rest."

"I was going into the fire, her usually busy needles motionless in her hands. There was always something awesome to Eglantine when Nannette's hand were still."

"Nigh upon death, mademoiselle. The figs had fallen, and the grapes were purple on the hillside when we reached Bern, and then it was only to meet sorrow upon sorrow. Mademoiselle Bertrand had placed her little niece in a convent as soon as she heard of M. le Capitaine's death, and in vain my lady appealed from her to the convent, and from the convent to the curé, and from the curé to the prefect. They either could not, or would not help her. There stood the king's edict, that permitted no children to be brought up in the faith in which they would be reared, and this Mademoiselle Bertrand claimed her little niece had done, and though my lady knew a toy might have tempted the baby lip to utter the ave which was all that would have been considered necessary to save a girl's soul, it had been hard enough to be simply separated from the little one, but to think of her behind convent-bars, fretting her timid heart out among strangers, neglected, perhaps ill-used—it was more than any mother could bear heart to bear."

"When at last the truth dawned on your mother she took to her chamber, and gave way to such comfortable grief, that M. Bertrand at last became uneasy, and sent for the curé. He was an old man, and seemed really touched by my lady's despair. He told her that it was because of her Huguenot leanings that the child had been taken from her, but that if she would reassure the Church as to her attachment, he would use his influence to have the little one restored. He thought your mother had anticipated this, for she said at once she would do anything, suffering anything that he would dictate. She had been only feeling after the truth, little one, she had not found it, and it was a sore test. In any case, conscience and mother-love had been on the side of the child, and she was a link between the two, and the human love was the stronger. God is pitiful; I think he will not judge harshly where he had given so little, but from that hour there was a broken-hearted look in my lady's eyes, which told me she felt she had turned her back upon her light, and most henceforth walk in darkness."

"They were heavy days that followed, sweetheart; I like not to dwell upon them. Our young madame was worn to a shadow with prayers and pilgrimages; but when in the early spring she ventured to ask for an interview with Mademoiselle Mignonnette, Father Joseph confessed that the child had been removed to a distant convent, and that it would take time to have her brought back. I think my lady's heart misgave her from that, but she redoubled her penances and fasts, until the year was over. One Christmas snowed, and upon the hills, and Father Joseph could no longer conceal the truth, and told her that the bishop had decided to train the little demoiselle for a nun, and her mother must resign all hopes of ever seeing her again. My young madame went to her room, and when she returned where the fatal word was spoken, and many a time in the sore illness that followed, I hoped God was going to take her out of this troublous world. But he is wiser than we, Mistress Eglantine, though we would often mar His counsels when we had the power. When the winter was ended, and the gentians began to purple in the sheltered places, my lady came forth from her chamber; but though she took her old place in the house, there was a spirit-look in her face, and she had the power in her step, which told that some link between her and this

life was broken. She showed no anger to those who had so sorely wronged her, but it was only that she should never know of the hamlet that fully housed her. To them she was an angel of mercy—especially the mothers, who knew her story, loved her, and many an hour would she sit in their lowly cottages, with their little ones on her lap, or in their knee, and it was only that summer, after she had been a young shepherd's wife to nurse a feeble baby back to life, that I found her weeping bitterly, and the cry on her lips was not for Mademoiselle Mignonnette, but 'My baby! my little, lost, unloved baby! A heart may count something of the cost of its gifts before hand, little one, but it is not until afterward that we wholly feel the price. I think it was not the first time your mother had cried out for the child she had put from her, though she had never at the word spoken her utterance. And I spoke out square and strong: 'The little one is rosy and well, madame. Antoine saw her this spring when he was in the Cevennes, where pastor Chevalier and his wife are living now. She is the darling of the whole countryside, and the best and the best of her kind. I love her as their own flesh and blood and have planned to marry her to their only son, when she is grown; but you have only to speak the word, my lady; you have gold to pay them for their mother's sake, but she would let me say no more. Mistress Eglantine, 'My heart shall break before I utter the word,' she said; 'who am I, Nannette, that I should take an innocent soul to train for God? And she dried her tears at once, and would never reopen the subject. But as there came no word of the chateau a young priest, with face like St. John, M. Fenelon was his name, and he has since come to be a great preacher, but then he was still at his studies. He was a distant kinsman of your father's, and had heard of my lady's trouble; it was not many days before he had won from her the whole story, for he had a gentle, kindly way about him, little one, which made even the most timid ready to put their trust in him. My lady told him everything, saying what had happened at Beaucourt, and he comforted her like a young brother. He bade her think no more that God had forsaken her, but believe that he would send her Father, who had only suffered these trials to come upon her that He might draw her nearer to Himself. He told her that it was God himself, not the church, who had been the cause of her hungering, and that He alone could satisfy her. But he reminded her, too, that the little one was still in the Good Shepherd's keeping, though removed from hers, and that if she would only trust Him, He would give His angels charge concerning the little one, and they should never go astray. And he spoke of the love and sympathy of the Lord Jesus, and the joy of following in the prints of those blessed feet, until his own face glowed like an angel's, and my lady's caught the reflection. Sometimes she would wonder at the perpetuity of the Church, and the sacredness of her ordinances, but to these she only listened absently, though she liked well enough to hear of the holy sisters of Port Royal, and a little look by M. Fenelon, which he lent her, she said, read like the words of the prophets: 'God face to face. But after all, it was the saintly beauty of M. Fenelon's own life, and the plain tokens of his near walk with God—more than ought he said—that set my lady's heart at rest. It would take a wiser head than mine, mistress Eglantine, to explain why it was good and pure can remain in the Church of Rome, but no one could live in the house with M. 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