

Our Story.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

BY AMELIA E. BARR,
Author of "Jan Volder's Wife," "The
Daughter of Fifty," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

But as an outcome of this conversation McNeil's carriage was at the door the following morning very early, and Helen and Grizelda were making hurried preparations for a journey to Edinburgh. No reason for it had been given, but both girls understood "the because" of the lady's unexpected movement. McNeil had called it "a little pleasure trip," but no one taking the journey felt it to be so. Each was leaving the person or the affairs which made the main interest of their lives. It was, in fact, to McNeil a journey of great self-denial. The herring fishery was at its height, the gunning season was at hand, and the moors were alive with birds. And aside from these disappointments, he felt it to be a wrong and an outrage that his own child should have given a strange man whom he despised and disliked the power to disarrange his household, and compel him to leave his home and his interests. For he was no more aware of this injustice and indignity than Grizelda was, and it gave him the heartache to see that she willingly subjected him to it.

It was, moreover, soon evident that the journey was to be in vain. Grizelda would take no part in the life of the metropolis. Dinners, dances, excursions, had no temptations for her. She declared that she was sick; she did not eat or sleep; she was cold, silent, apathetic, and treated the old friends and kindred of the family with a sullen indifference which gave great offence, and which the lady, in some cases, found it beyond his power to explain away.

One afternoon he desired to make a call upon Lady McNeil, the widow of his second cousin. Grizelda was her namesake; it was a matter of the gravest courtesy that she should accompany her father and sister. But the willful girl made so many excuses, was so determined to be disagreeable and disappointing, that it was thought best not to insist upon her company.

For such unkind and persistent ill-temper and selfishness the devil sometimes rewards his slaves with their own desire. Scarcely had McNeil and Helen left the door of their hotel, when Lord Maxwell passed it; Grizelda, standing listlessly at the window, lifted her eyes and saw him. His gaze was fixed upon her; he was trying to arrest her attention. In five minutes she was by his side. They turned into a quiet square, and were soon discussing—aloud—their mutual interests and amusements; to reflect, also, that the young lady, Colin McNeil, was deprived of the society of Helen; and that Helen was taken from her lover and from all the duties in the castle and village which interested her so much.

"I think we have had quite the best of it, Zeld," he said, with a malicious triumph. "Now then, my love, meet me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock in Saint Andrew's Kirk, and I will make you Lady Maxwell in spite of them all."

"First, consider what I shall tell you, Walter. My father says plainly that if I marry without his consent, £80,000 in the Bank of Scotland will every thing of it go to Helen. If he agrees to my marriage, Helen and Colin are to have the estate and £20,000, I the residue."

"£80,000! What!"

"We ought not to throw that away."

"Indeed, we ought not."

"It is worth a few words, Walter; and I do not like to come to you penniless and by stealth. Father is really kindhearted; quickly in a rage, but just as quick to forgive. A little conciliation will win him."

"I have already ordered my factor to see his factor and pay whatever they may decide to be right for those miserable sheep that were worried. When you return home I will call upon him and ask for your hand. If he consents he can scarcely refuse your fortune; if he does not consent—"

"I shall make his life so wretched that he will be thankful to change his mind. It is a very hard thing if a girl cannot choose her own husband. Oh, my dear one, how happy you have made me! I can endure all things now till we meet again."

There was nothing for Grizelda to endure but the burdens she laid upon her own shoulders; but it pleased her to imagine herself an innocent victim of parental oppression and unsisterly lack of sympathy.

It was impossible for her to remain long with her lover, but arrangements were made which permitted her to meet him nearly every day for a longer or a shorter time. And it gave her no compunction to save all her smiles, all her pleasant ways and words for her lover, and darken all her father's and sister's days with an affection of suffering which had now no shadow of existence.

In a week or two Helen began to suspect this. There were times when

it was impossible for Grizelda to quite subdue the light of expectation in her eyes or the dreamy smile of retrospective pleasure around her mouth. Grizelda was in the daily society of Maxwell, Helen was satisfied of that; but there was something in the girl's nature which forbade her to watch her sister, no matter how excusable circumstances might seem to make the act. Her eyes indeed questioned her and Grizelda was aware of the suspicion. "Things are coming to a crisis," she thought and I may as well direct them."

One afternoon the lady, having been sorely tried by her contradiction all the morning, refused to go out for his customary drive in the afternoon. His heart failed him. He felt as if it were useless to prolong the conflict. The very chivalry of his nature led him to a trust and consideration where his daughter was concerned that he would by no means have conceded to a disobedient son. He could not watch Grizelda's movements and read her letters and be stern and imperative with her. The pale, silent, weary-looking girl on the sofa appealed to him not only as his daughter, but as one of a sex which demanded his courtesy and consideration. He felt this day her injustice, her want of appreciation for this courtesy, and his heart was so sad that he could not make the effort to face the world.

As the time approached for Grizelda to keep her tryst, she threw off her indifference, rose from her sofa, and went to her room. The lady did not notice the movement but Helen followed her sister. She was taking out her bonnet and mantle, and she made no secret of her action.

"Are you going out, Grizelda? How pleased father will be! It is not yet too late for a drive."

"I am not going for a drive, and I do not want either father's company or yours. I do not mean to be rude to Helen, only I must go alone."

"Are you going to meet Lord Maxwell? I have suspected this!"

"Then your suspicions are correct, Helen. I am going to meet my Walter. Goodness knows, it is all I have to live for!"

"You should not say such wicked things. You have all that truest love can give you. But if you are meeting Maxwell here, father ought to know. He is pining for the mother and the sea and the comforts of his own home. He has been denying himself for six weeks everything he enjoys simply in the hope that he was keeping you outside the influence of a bad man."

"Then tell him to go back to Edderloch. He cannot keep Lord Maxwell from me unless he locks me up in the castle strong-room, and he cannot keep me from Lord Maxwell if I have the wit and strength to reach him. I despise a girl who gives up her lover because her friends don't approve of him. I would die first."

"There is no necessity for heroics, Grizelda. Nature asks you to die. And don't you think there may be something equally displeasing to deceiving a good father, and putting him to daily anxiety and discomfort, because your lover does not approve of him. Depend upon it, father has no intention of locking you up. He thinks you have chosen an unworthy husband, and he would suffer a great deal himself to wear your heart from Lord Maxwell or to show you that there are plenty of better lovers in the world, but he has no intention of forcing you to give him up."

"Then tell him we may as well go home. It will be more comfortable for every one."

This news was more easily broken to the lady than Helen had dared to hope. Returning to his presence she found him mournfully watching the gay throng which makes Princes-street in the afternoon so fair a sight. "I was thinking of Edderloch," he said, as he turned away. "I would give something to see the great billows tumbling wild and high and sending clouds of spray against the castle wall, or to be in the shadow of the hills and see the little brown huts nestling there, and the colts and dogs, and the flocks of sheep moving to and fro—or better still, to be after the cock grouse or watching the red deer going westward in a swinging gallop."

"Dear father, we may as well go back to-morrow." Her face, troubled and piteous, told him the rest. He let his head fall forward as he asked in a low voice, "Is he here?"

"Yes."

"And she is meeting him?"

"Yes."

Then his soul forgot all words, but the mournful Gaelic in which his fathers had cried out in their sorrow for unknown centuries, *O! hana-ree! O! hana-ree!* And upon his clasped hands the tears dropped down, and Helen knelt at his side and kissed them away. (To be continued.)

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

LESSON III, April 21, 1899.

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

Mark xii. 28-34.

COMMIT VERSES 30-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Love is the fulfilling of the law.—Rom. xiii. 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love; but the greatest of these is Love.

DAILY READINGS.

Mr. Mark xii. 13-27.
Th. Mark xii. 28-34.
W. Matt. xii. 34-40.
Th. 1 John v. 1-21.
F. 1 Cor. xiii. 1-13.
Sa. 1 John iii. 10-18.
Su. Luke x. 25-37.

TIME.—A.D. 30, Tuesday, April 4.
The same day as the last lesson.

PLACE.—The temple court at Jerusalem.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—Matt. xii. 34-40.

INTERVENING STORY.—After Jesus had spoken the three parables, one of which we studied last Sunday, there were three attempts to entrap Jesus, so as to have occasion for arresting him and bringing him before the Roman court. First came the Pharisees and Herodians with a difficult question about tribute. Then came the sceptical Sadducees with a puzzling question about the resurrection. And now comes a scribe, one learned in the law, with a hard question.

HEALS OVER HARD PLACES.—28. One of the scribes: those who wrote out the Scriptures and were learned in them. Which is the first commandment? first in importance and binding force. This question was a constant bone of contention among the scribes.

29. *Thou shalt love God*, etc.: from Deut. vi. 4-9. *Thy heart*: affections and will. *Soul*: the seat of the desires, disposition, character. *The mind*: reflective and reasoning powers. These include the whole being. *All thy strength*: the full and entire devotion of all these powers. 31. *Thy neighbour*: any one whom you can help. *As thyself*: not as one does, but as one ought, to love himself. *None*: greater; they include all others. 33. *More than burnt offerings*: love is the highest act of which we are capable. 34. *Not far from the kingdom*: he only needed repentance and faith to be within.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND SPECIAL REPORTS.—The other puzzling questions, and Jesus' wise replies.—The scribes.—One God.—Our God.—How much we should love God.—How love fulfils the law.—The measure of love to others.—When people are near the kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS.

REVIEW.—What was the parable of our last lesson? Where was it told? When?

INTRODUCTION.—Why did the leaders wish to entrap Jesus? What was the first of the three puzzling questions asked Jesus? How did he answer? Relate the attempt of the Sadducees, and how Jesus answered them.

SUBJECT: LOVE TO GOD AND MAN.

I. LOVE TO GOD (vs. 28-30).—Who next came to Jesus with a difficult question? Who were the scribes? What did one of them ask Jesus? Repeat Jesus' reply? Where did Jesus find this written? (Deut. vi. 4, 5) Did it show Jesus' wisdom that he took his answer from their own Scriptures? Is there only one God? What reasons have you for thinking so? Why is he called our God?

What is our first duty to God? How much should we love him? What reasons can you give why we should love him so much? What is the Golden Text? How does love fulfil the law? Show how love to God will lead us to keep the first commandment. The second. The third. The fourth.

II. LOVE TO MAN (v. 31).—What is the second great command? Who is our neighbour? (Luke x. 25-37) How much should we love our neighbour? What description of love do you find in 1 Cor. xiii. 7? Why is love so important? How does it lead us to keep the fifth commandment? The sixth? The seventh? The eighth? The ninth? The tenth? What is the Golden Rule?

III. NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM (vs. 32-34).—What did the scribe say to Jesus' reply? Why is love better and more acceptable to God than forms or sacrifices? (1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.) What did Jesus say to the scribe? Why was the scribe really not far from the kingdom of God? Of what other persons are we told almost the same? (Mark x. 17-22; Acts xxv. 28.) When may we be said to be near the kingdom of heaven? Is it safe to remain there? What should we do?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. When one does anything well, it brings more of the same kind to do.

II. He is one God, and only one, and we should take him to be our God.

III. He that loves God supremely will keep his commandments.

IV. Love is the fulfilling of the law, because (1) no commandment is really kept unless obeyed in love and from love; (2) because love leads to obedience.

V. The measure of our love to others should be our love to ourselves. See the Golden Rule (Matt. vii. 12).

VI. Those are near the kingdom of God who clearly see the truth, who are almost persuaded to obey, who feel the influences of the Spirit, whose conscience is awakened.

VII. To be only almost saved is to be lost.

THE last tower, with a blinding cup, may stand
And share its Jew's drop with another near.
—Mrs. Browning.

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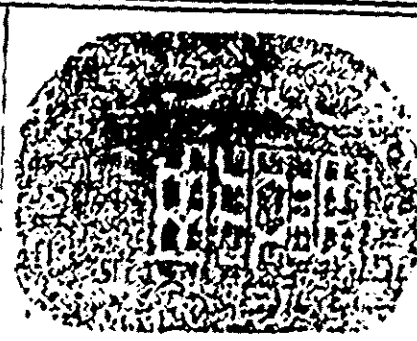
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