

asked, looking down half sadly on her bright animated face.

"Yes, I did. I daresay you will laugh at me, cynical as you are, but I have made up my mind, and I am fully determined—"

"Determined to be as happy as you possibly can, I suppose; that is really the gist of all human desires, first and last, I am afraid."

"Yes, I do want to be happy. I am not in the least so enamoured of self denial and suffering as some good people are. I want to be as happy as I can, but I want something more. I want my life to be noble and great, at least in its aims. I will not have it all given up to the commonplace selfishness of seeking only personal happiness, I will have it a grand strong life that shall leave its mark for good in the world, and be of value to others as well as myself—a life men shall honour and bless—and if along with this highest purpose I can compass my own peace and enjoyment as well, why so much the better."

"A 'vaulting ambition' indeed," said Colonel Dysart with a shake of the head.

"Which you think will 'o'erleap itself.' You do not trust me, you sceptical father; you doubt my powers and my firmness. Very well, sir; you shall see," and she nodded her head at him with saucy defiance.

"I shall not see, child, as the problem can only be solved at the end of your life, which it is to be hoped will be prolonged very far beyond mine; there will be no one to remind you of these magnificent plans, which I believe you will have forgotten long before the time comes to judge how far you have carried them out."

"I shall not let myself forget: I will be a witness against myself if I do fail in my purpose. Look here" (and she took from her pocket a little gold-rimmed book furnished with lock and key), "this is my most cherished notebook, and the paper is so prepared that anything written in it cannot be effaced; it shall keep the record of my present life-schemes till the day comes to test their fulfilment;" and with a determined air and steady hand she wrote a few lines in the book, then closed and locked it, and starting to her feet she took the key and flung it far away into the sea. "Now, father, you see at least for the present I mean what I say; I have written on a page of this book the words: 'I have one life only,' and below I have said very distinctly what I now mean that life to be. I shall keep the book in the little iron case where I have my mother's diamonds and all my other valuables, and when I am as old as Miss Amherst, if I live as long, or at the end of my life, whenever it may come, I shall break it open and look at that record, and know whether the end is success or failure."

Colonel Dysart looked up at her as she stood beside him, her eyes sparkling with the bold daring and confidence of youth, and said rather gravely, "I doubt if you are wise to keep such a record, Una; but I believe Miss Amherst's warning turned almost entirely on the question of happiness. She felt it was still possible for your one life to be as joyful as her own appears to have been wretched; if you accomplish that part of your programme I shall be very well content, without your attaining to any of this greatness and grandeur with which you wish to endow your existence."

"But I shall not!" said Una, with a proud flashing smile. "Some writers say that this world, of which I know nothing, is a very pitiful place; where there may be a certain glory in merely hating everything narrow and mean, and above all—false, as utterly as I do; so perhaps it will not be very difficult after all to make this

little book a true prophet. I shall go and lock it up at once, in the safe hiding-place, where it will stay all the years I have to live;" and she darted away, without so much as a shadow of doubt or fear on her bright young face.

(To be continued.)

SAUL'S CONVERSION.

For the persecuting career of Saul we turn to Acts viii. 1, 3, 4. Hence in v. 1, "yet." This man was well born, Phil. iii. 5; well-educated, Acts xxii. 3; zealous and sincere, Phil. iii. 6; influential, Acts ix. 1, 2, could "get letters" from the high priest; well known, v. 18; very energetic, v. 1, 22; and very determined against Christ and His cause (Acts xxvi. 11). His conversion, therefore, is an event of great moment, and may well be studied with interest as it is recorded with fulness.

He was born in Tarsus (v. 11), in Cilicia (Acts xxii. 3), brought up a Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 6), and, like his namesake in the Old Testament, a Benjamite (Rom. xi. 1). The Jews were numerous in Cilicia, and Saul's family was free and probably wealthy, as they could afford a good education to Saul, who had the best prospects as a learned man. The Jews believed that "he who teaches not his son a trade teaches him to be a thief," and so Saul had been taught tent-making (Acts xviii. 3).

He went unto the high priest, president of the council, for a commission to arrest, bring to Jerusalem, and punish members of the synagogue at Damascus who believed in Jesus. The council was the ruling body over all the Jewish church, however scattered. "Men and women"—for of the latter many were then, as now, specially devout believers—were to be brought "bound unto Jerusalem."

Damascus has an interesting history from Abraham's days till now—into which the teachers will look with interest. (See Concordance.) It has many Christians now in its population of 150,000, and though Mohammedans rule it, the truth is spreading. It is "beautiful for situation." (See map.)

St. Luke describes the mode of Saul's enlightenment on the way (v. 3). The other apostles had accompanied with Christ, and three of them had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. All of them had seen Him "risen" and ascending. Saul's mind was full of the belief that He was an impostor. To be assured of His existence and glory was his great need. This the Lord supplies. In light as at Sinai, in the Sheeshinah, on the Mount, and later in Patmos, above even the eastern sun's light (Acts xxvi. 13), a dazzling, overpowering (Acts xxii. 6) brightness prostrated him and his companions, who were probably mounted like himself.

(V. 4.) A voice addressed him by name, which identifies the speaker with Christ, "me," and set in its true light Saul's cruel work, "persecuting," i.e., inflicting evils on men for their religious opinions.

(V. 5.) As we say, he knew the speaker "Lord;" and yet he did not, "Who art thou?" He probably saw a form, though nothing is said of that. Indeed, no particulars are given but such as are needful to explain his complete and sudden change of action.

The Lord strongly identifies himself with his people. "I am Jesus," etc., and then quotes a proverb of the East founded on the way of driving oxen with goads or sticks with sharp points. The older pupils may be told that the proverb applies to them when they resist God's demands, go against the Holy Ghost in the word; against their own consciences; when they quarrel with or break God's laws; and

when they refuse to go whither God would lead them.

(V. 6.) Saul trembles and is astonished. His life had been one grand mistake. He is the foe of this plainly Divine being. He has persecuted Him. But he did it "ignorantly and in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13), and now that he sees the error, he sets about correcting it with a promptness and whole-heartedness (Gal. i. 16) which may well teach us, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When his heart felt that before the Lord, the quarrel was at an end, he was reconciled. He laid down his weapons. There is no pride, self-will or arrogance here. He believes. He means to obey. He will wait for orders from the Lord. The Lord does not give them at once, but puts him in the way of receiving instructions. He had remained prostrate. "Arise," etc. The Lord has His own way of teaching every disciple, and it is no doubt arranged in view of the greatest amount of good to all.

The description of v. 7 has been already noticed.

V. 8 shows us a strange sight. When the stricken leader rose from the earth, he was utterly blind. All the outer world is closed out from him that he may continue with God, his remembered word and his own soul. How much that strong, active, ambitious soul had to recall! How intense its humiliation must have been! There could be no intercourse with him on the part of expectant allies in the work of persecution. He had no explanations to make prematurely. He was alone with God. What eventful three days, though his body must have been inactive! Blind, without food or rest, absorbed in the affairs of that new life on which he was entering, how deep must have been the impressions now made on that strong spirit! He learns the nature of law, sin, self, and grace.

In the particulars of Ananias' visit (vs. 10-17), there is nothing requiring explanation. He is an obscure disciple, (no one could allege that Paul received authority from some great man,) yet how high the honor put on him! A lowly teacher may be forming a mind that is to evangelize China. If any of us should visit Damascus, we could still walk up the "Straight street," now called the "Street of Bazaars," dividing the city into two parts. There could be no risk in going to Saul now, "for behold he prayeth," the sign of a new man, a God-fearing man. He was prepared in vision for Ananias' visit (v. 12) as Cornelius was for Peter's. His visit was expected and his character was known at Damascus (vs. 13, 14). But all is changed (v. 15). He is a "chosen vessel" (no wonder Paul made much of God's choice, Eph. i. 4) to carry God's name far and wide (see the fulfilment of this to the end of the Acts). Then comes an antithesis, "He came to inflict suffering on you for my sake," but (v. 16) "I will show . . . he must suffer." So Ananias simply obeyed; announced himself, calls Saul "brother," laid his hands on him, imparted the Holy Ghost, while his sight was restored, scales, as it were, either literally or figuratively, falling from his eyes. There, in the house, probably at once, he was baptized, as all other believers in Jesus were, so confessing Christ.

The points to be made clear to the pupils from this lesson are the following:

(1) Saul has supplied to him what the other apostles enjoyed, that he might be an apostle. He saw the Lord, heard His voice, beheld His glory.

(2) Everything about his conversion shows its reality. It was against his education, tastes, interests, pursuits. He had no prepossession, and no selfish aim on the

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