

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NELL," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER III. (Continued).

HESTER's feeling that night was an uneasy consciousness of disloyalty, born, not of that evening's interview with her friend, but of many another prior to it.

When Grace went to her room, she had not at first the opportunity for reflection over what had occurred, and, by the time the opportunity came, she was too tired to avail herself of it, but dropped asleep instead.

"Is that you, Grace?" she asked, starting up in bed.

"Yes, mother; I thought you were asleep."

"Turn up the gas, Grace; I am terrified."

Obeying at once, Grace saw her mother looking very pale, and staring at her, with wide-open eyes.

"Lie down again, mother; you have been dreaming, haven't you?"

"I believe so; about your father."

Grace sat down by her, and began to talk, choosing as practical a topic as possible.

"By-and-by Mrs. Norris said: 'Come, dear, you had better get to bed; you must be tired.'"

"Shall I sleep with you, mother?"

"I should be very glad if you would."

Mrs. Norris, holding her daughter's hand, soon fell asleep again. She was subject to such fits of alarm at night, and Grace was quite used to soothing her under them.

Grace very speedily followed her mother's example. The excitement consequent upon that day's adventure had passed away from her mind, and had been superseded by quite different mental sensations. The remaining result was only a bodily fatigue, which made her very sleepy; and had it been suggested that the affair was likely in any degree to affect her future, she would have greeted the prophecy with derision.

CHAPTER IV.

"APARTMENTS."

THE next morning three letters, addressed to John Waterhouse, Esq., lay in the coffee-room of the Langham Hotel, awaiting the arrival of their owner.

The first letter he took up was from a lady, as was evident: no less from the dainty note-paper and monogram, than from its feminine caligraphy. It contained a formal invitation to dinner, and was tossed aside very carelessly.

"DEAR SIR,—We have made enquiries as per your favour of the 15th ult. in the village of Little Carpton, Bucks, and the neighbourhood, and also in Liverpool, where Mr. Richard Waterhouse appears to have resided for some years before leaving England for the United States.

"This letter obviously displeased the recipient, for a cloud overcast his face as he read, and he threw down the letter in evident disgust. In its light, the communication from the Cape assumed new importance, and was re-read, for the owner of the ostrich farm began to re-consider the question of its sale, and to regard a semi-barbarous existence in the hunting-grounds of South Africa as a possible refuge from the disappointments which had awaited him in England.

"This was puzzling, so Waterhouse explained that he wanted something suitable and handsome for a young lady to wear in the street. Then, surely, the gentleman would prefer a cloak or a jacket. The gentleman would prefer whatever was most recommended. So the sympathizing young lady recommended seal-skin, and showed him specimens. Waterhouse approved of the appearance, but questioned, 'Now, is this the best kind of thing a lady can wear?' and, being assured, with evident surprise at his ignorance, that it was so, he professed himself satisfied, and, as to the size, gave it as his opinion that the lady was, he should say, about five feet two in height, and small in proportion. Then it occurred to him that he did not know the young lady's name, though he knew the address, and that it might be appropriated by the wrong sister. However, this little difficulty only whetted his interest in the matter, as it would give him an object in his walk; he would win the information somehow or other.

bright life absorbed into that of the dusty travel-stained old merchant, without any question of sacrifice given or received.

And now John Waterhouse, the son, was the only one of the name. His father had died on the eve of carrying out his intention of realising his property, and coming with his son to end his days in the old country. That son was in England alone, and therein lay the sting for him. He was not without acquaintance after three months in England, for a honeyed flower will naturally attract the bees; and Waterhouse had made some few friends during his sojourn in the country as a boy, with whom he had, anticipated with some pleasure the renewal of acquaintance. But in each case he had found some blank, some failure. In eight years friends will grow apart in circumstances, tastes, thoughts. Waterhouse found his place filled up, as we find an impression made in sand, and that he would have to thrust himself in afresh, or he found a development of the boy of eight years ago with which he felt no inclination to acquaint himself. Of relations in this country he knew of none, with the exception of a certain cousin of his father's, who had for many years been lost sight of. Towards this cousin and the possible relationships which his existence might have gathered to itself, his imagination had been constantly turning. Especially did he dream of sweet girl cousins and a motherly English matron; for Waterhouse had never known what it was to have the ties of relationship with any woman, and the instincts of his warm-blooded home-loving nature had gone to the creation of an ideal, conceived with the energetic enthusiasm of inexperience. But of the cousin and his imaginary family he had been able to find no trace, and now this morning had come the final crash of his breaking glass.

He consumed his coffee and eggs abstractedly, questioning gloomily the while whether, in the absence of all conditions which could make existence worth having, the Cape did not offer a better substitute for happiness than the old country. His favourite project of buying land in the immediate neighbourhood of his cousins, and of settling down to farm it, seemed suddenly to have become as unsubstantial as that dream-family itself.

Breakfast over, he walked up and down the room, of which he happened to be the only occupant; with his hands in his pockets. Finally he went to the window, and stood there frowning, and looking out, at first without seeing anything. But having at bottom a wholesome outward-working nature, he speedily found his attention diverted from his grievances by the spectacle of two urchins playing at 'leap-frog,' and from that he passed to observation of the weather, and to the desire to get out into the open air.

It was natural also that the aspect of the morning should suggest the fog of yesterday, and with that his mind recurred to the image of the damsel whom, like a knight of old, he had rescued from misfortune. That same image had usurped a very large portion of his mental retina since the adventure, and had only been dispossessed by the news of that morning. She by no means corresponded to his ideal of womanhood, which was of the calm-eyed, majestic, yet tender sort, fit for a pedestal. But the apparition of that small, quick, gay-tempered girl, with the flashing eyes, had left him with an intimate regret, a searching pang that she was not his sister or his cousin; that he could make no claim upon her friendliness, that he should never hear her laugh or find himself in her curiously animating presence again.

When he got out of the hotel he paused irresolutely for a moment. He had nothing to do, nowhere in particular to go. But an idea striking him, he started off energetically. It had occurred to him in connection with that persistent image that he had never explored those northern regions in which Barbara Street was situated, and as he had explored S., E., and W., what could he do better than extend his knowledge of London in that direction?

Traversing Regent Street, however, another idea struck him. Wouldn't it be a happy thought to send that little girl a present? A pleasant curve came into the lines of his mouth. She was very poor and shabby; and, though doubtless proud, her pride could not be offended, since she would never know from whom the present came. But what should it be? Jewellery would be quite unsuitable. He recalled the conversation. She had spoken of dresses, but had obviously purchased these; besides, he knew enough of the subject to be aware that here he might make a mistake. A bonnet would be open to the same objection. These articles of attire disposed of, what was left? Obviously, ashawl. He turned into a shop apparently offering the necessary qualifications, and asked for these wares—the handsomest articles producible.

"Certainly, sir. Is it something light, or a warm wrap; did you want, sir? How would you like something Indian?"

This was puzzling, so Waterhouse explained that he wanted something suitable and handsome for a young lady to wear in the street. Then, surely, the gentleman would prefer a cloak or a jacket. The gentleman would prefer whatever was most recommended. So the sympathizing young lady recommended seal-skin, and showed him specimens. Waterhouse approved of the appearance, but questioned, 'Now, is this the best kind of thing a lady can wear?' and, being assured, with evident surprise at his ignorance, that it was so, he professed himself satisfied, and, as to the size, gave it as his opinion that the lady was, he should say, about five feet two in height, and small in proportion. Then it occurred to him that he did not know the young lady's name, though he knew the address, and that it might be appropriated by the wrong sister. However, this little difficulty only whetted his interest in the matter, as it would give him an object in his walk; he would win the information somehow or other.

(To be continued.)

SUNDAY EVENING WITH THE CHILDREN.

"This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."—A Voice out of Heaven.

I WANT you, dear children, to understand that people are loved by God—really, deeply loved, even whilst they are far from what God would like them to be; for it is a glorious fact, and if once you get it into your heart it will be a fountain of joy and goodness; but the heart finds this hard to believe. It is distressed by fears and doubts about God's love to it, because it knows that it is not what it ought to be. It sometimes says to itself, "God cannot love me, for I am not good." Then our heart condemns us; but heart may be wrong, for God's thoughts are not always like ours; and indeed: it is wrong. Not in saying, "I am not

good"—the heart that feels that is quite right—but in saying, "Because I am not good, God does not love me"—the heart that feels that is quite wrong. "Our hearts condemn us, but God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things"; so it is what God says, not what we feel, that must be right. Let us hear, then, what God does say about this matter of His love to those who are not good.

I might take I do not know how many texts for such a subject; but I will only take one: "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," words which God said about Jesus Christ, and which tell us that Jesus Christ was a child of God Who was both beloved and pleasing. The two things are put separately—my "beloved Son" and my "well-pleasing Son," the one that satisfies me, makes me happy—as if to suggest that some might be beloved, who were not pleasing, who do not satisfy Him and make Him happy. And if there were not such, if God only loved the "well-pleasing," then He would only love Jesus Christ—for only Jesus is wholly and beautifully good. But the very thing Jesus Christ came into the world to tell us was that God does love more than the good, loves all men in the world, indeed. God sent Jesus to get us just to believe that. So you are on no account to fancy that when you are not what you ought to be, God does not love you. It is quite true that He would be more happy in His love if you were better than you are, and He would be perfectly happy if you were perfectly good. Still, whilst you are only just what you are, God loves you, and though you should not only not please Him, but though you should even give Him pain and grieve Him, He must continue to love you really and deeply, and to love you as long as you live.

Come, then, and let us see if our own hearts can tell us anything about this difference between "well-beloved" and "well-pleasing," for God wants us to understand it; and it will help to make us glad, and good and strong. Is there, then, anything in children's own hearts which can show what it is to love, really to love, and yet not to be pleased with what you love, and even to be grieved and pained at the sight of it? For God made your childhood's hearts something like His own. I think there is; so let us see if we can find it. And, first, listen to a little boy in a parlour that we know, and see how love in children themselves is a matter of course; how children themselves love some things all the same when they give them pleasure and when they give them pain. "Oh, papa, what can be the matter with Dicky?" enquired a sad, earnest little voice one day; "he sits on his perch all day, stuffed up in a corner, and never sings a bit. Do come and see; he does look so ill." And taking his father's hand the distressed little owner of the bird led him to its cage to see what could be done. And there, its head down, its eyes closed, its feathers ruffled, looking the very picture of misery, stood the poor child's canary; yet it was difficult to say which was the more miserable, the bird or the little bird's owner. It used to be for ever standing up, smooth and brisk, and preening its wings, picking its seed, darting from perch to perch; a pert, saucy little fellow, listening to all he said; and singing its very heart away. Then the bird was the boy's pleasure and delight, now he had the hardest work to keep from tears. But do you think that on this account he does not love it now? "Not love it!" you exclaim. "Why, it is just his love for it that makes him so miserable," and you are quite right. This boy loves his bird all the same, though his love brings him misery and tears. Well, then, through this way of a good child's heart, let us rise up to thoughts of God's heart, and of His ways to us. We are not giving God perfect pleasure (some day we shall be doing so), but love of us flows out of the fulness of His own heart; whether we please Him or grieve Him, He loves us all the same. We are to Him like the disappointing canary is to the boy. And God is like that bird's faithful lover, who loved just because he could not help it; it was a matter of course. Yes, that boy's heart had a love like God's.

But children have themselves learned that love to them, as well as love in them, may be a matter of course, and not at all depending on whether it gives those who love them joy or sorrow.

A young boy is hobbling slowly along on a little crutch. His brothers and sisters are scampering round and round the garden, free and wild as March hares—shouting, leaping, laughing, in brim- ming-over gladness of perfect health. Poor boy! The father stands watching through the window his heart full of anguish too deep for tears. "I'd give everything I have to get that boy's leg right," he is saying to himself. His boy is lame—for life, the doctor says—and more than lame, he suffers pain so dreadfully that at times he lies on his back days and nights, pale and pinched, and looking like a little old man. Now that the father sees his dear boy on the garden walk once more, he has a little gladness, but the boy's slow, weary movements, and his pale, drawn face cut him up dreadfully; his heart seems as if it must break. But is that cripple boy not loved? Loved; you are astonished at the question. The one thing in all the world most certain is that there is none loved like him. A faithful father's love must flow, though it wear his heart away; it cannot help it, nor would he if he could. And it is in love like that, my child, that we see what the love of God is like. It is like the love of a father most perfectly kind.

But to learn that hearts can love what gives them pain, we need not look at a good father. We can do it in many other ways. Alas, alas! the world is full of loves which bring pain. I once went into a schoolroom where every little scholar was deaf. It was a deeply sad sight. Little minds that looked out of those eyes were all shut up in long, long silence. Though they looked bright, walked about, smiled; played with their toys, yet the sight almost broke my heart, and made me feel I would give all I had to bring their hearing back again. Yet I was no relation, but quite a stranger to them, and they were strangers to me. I knew nothing at all of any one of them, nor even of one person who was connected with any of them. Yet in spite of this, I thought of the little things with real sorrow, and went home to pray for them as I had not prayed for even my own family for many a day. I was touched with their infirmity; my love for them gave me pain. It is with some such feelings God regards all the people in the world. His love is turned to pity, a pity which longs to bless.

So, believe always that God loves you: when you please Him, He loves you with delight; when you pain Him, He loves you with pity, but He always loves you. And let the knowledge of this help you to hate wrongdoing of every kind, and to live purer, nobler, more pleasing lives.—Rev. A. W. Hays.

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

LESSON VII., February 14th, Dan. v., 1-12, 23-25, GOLDEN TEXT.

"Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting."—Dan. v., 27.

TIME.—B. C. 538. Almost fifty years after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Babylon.

RULERS.—Nabonidus, King of the Babylonian Empire, now at Borsippa. Belshazzar, his oldest son, associated with him and reigning at Babylon. Cyrus, King of the Medes and Persians.

DANIEL.—Now about 80 years old. For more than 60 years he mentions but one incident of his life, that of interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He was now in some official position (Dan. viii, 27), but probably a subordinate official.

BELSHAZZAR, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother. He was associated with his father as king. He was probably sixteen or seventeen years old. His father, having attacked Cyrus who was besieging Babylon, was defeated, and was kept from returning to the city by the besieging army. So that Belshazzar was the only king now in Babylon.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES.—Cyrus had been besieging the city for two years. But the walls were strong. There was food enough in the city to last twenty years. The citizens felt safe. An annual festival to some idol now occurred, and king and people engaged in a great revel.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—Drank wine: it was the excitement of strong drink that led the king to the sin and to ruin. 2. Golden vessels out of the temple: taken by Nebuchadnezzar, B. C. 604 and 586, 68 and 48 years before. Drank in them: thus profaning them. He insulted God by using them in a revel, and in a feast to idols (see vs. 22, 23). 5. Fingers: the fingers that held the pen, with no arm or person to move them, showed that it was supernatural. Over against the candlestick: that stood on the king's table, so as to be seen in the brightest light. 7. Chaldeans: i. e., a priest class of wise men. Third ruler: i. e., next to the king, who was second, his father being first. 8. Could not read the writing: so as to understand what was meant. The words were familiar enough. 10. Queen: the mother, not the wife of Belshazzar. She remembered Daniel, in her father's days. 25. Mene: these are Aramaic (i. e., the Hebrew of the time of Christ) words. 26. Mene: i. e., numbered, the last number of its years counted. And Daniel applied it to the king. 27. Tidal: i. e., weighed. 28. Perses: divided, broken to pieces. This is the singular, of which Upharsin is the plural. Persian is the same word.

Even while this was going on, the army of Cyrus had entered the city, by drawing off the water of the river Euphrates, which ran through the city. His army marched up the river bed, and entered by the broken gates, which in their revels the guards had left open. See Jer. li., 30-32, 53-58.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Intervening history.—Daniel.—Belshazzar.—The circumstances.—The handwriting on the wall.—Its interpretation.—The fall of Babylon.—The Bible confirmed by the monuments.

LEARN BY HEART Prov. i., 24-31.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How many years between the events of this lesson and the last? What event in Daniel's life during this time is recorded? How old was Daniel at this time? How long before Christ was the capture of Babylon.

SUBJECT: SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

I. THE SIN (vs. 1-4).—Who was now besieging Babylon? Who was king in Babylon? How old was he? What great feast did he hold? Who attended it? What did he do when under the influence of wine? What was the wickedness in this? When had these golden vessels been taken from the temple? (2 Kings xxiv., 10-13; xxv., 8, 13-15) With what sins does Daniel charge him? (Dan. v., 18-23.) How many sins do you find in these accounts as committed by Belshazzar? In what ways do young people treat sacred things with irreverence?

How did Belshazzar come to be king alone in Babylon at this time? Where was his father Nabonidus? How have lately discovered inscriptions of Babylon confirmed the Bible here?

II. THE WARNING (vs. 5-9).—What appeared during these revels? What made it seem supernatural? On what part of the wall were the words written? How did this affect the king? Why did it trouble him? What did the king offer to the person who should tell him what the writing meant? Why are sinners troubled by anything that manifests God's mysterious power? In what language was the writing? Why could not the wise men read and understand? Who are meant by Chaldeans here? Why did God give the king this warning?

III. THE PUNISHMENT (vs. 10-12, 23-28).—Who told the king where to learn what he wished? What description is here given of Daniel? Where had he shown his wisdom? What were the words? What did they mean? Did it require courage in Daniel to say these things? When and how were his words fulfilled? How did his drunken revelry help to bring the punishment? What warnings does God give us against our sins? In what balances are we weighed? When are we found wanting? How do our sins help to bring their own punishment?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- I. Intemperance leads to many other sins.
II. The king was guilty of intemperance, idolatry, profanity, irreverence, pride, carelessness, godlessness.
III. Irreverence in the house of God is a great sin.
IV. God warns us by conscience, by His Word, by His providence, by His Holy Spirit.
V. God weighs our characters, our actions, our motives, our intentions.
VI. We are weighed when we are tested by temptation, by opportunities to do good, by the Bible.
VII. Sin helps to bring its own punishment, as we see in the case of intemperance.—Peloubet.

DRINK AND TAXES.—The Rev. David Macre of Dundee, speaking in that town on drinking in relation to poverty and trade depression, said that with the money spent on drink in a month, the town's business could be carried on for a whole year, and the taxgatherer need never darken any door.