

the highways thronged with coaches, and horsemen and pedestrians, flying as from a doomed or sacked city, and to feel of how little avail it was to fly if, after all, it was the earth itself,—the solid immovable earth,—that was being shaken.

It was very pleasant to me to see what a kind of tender reverence crept over the manner of both father's sisters towards mother, before we left London.

Aunt Henderson, as she packed up for us a hamper full of jellies and cordials, on the night of our departure said to me, authoritatively, as if she were completing an act of canonization: "Kitty, my dear, your mother and Aunt Jeanie are the best women I know. They are as good examples of perfection as I ever wish to see. They may argue against the doctrine as much as they like, but they prove it every day of their lives. You understand, my dear, Mr. Wesley only argues for *Christian*, not for *Adamic* or *angelic* perfection. He admits that even the perfect are liable to errors of judgment, which your poor mother also proves, no doubt, by her little bigotry about the church, and Aunt Jeanie by two or three little Presbyterian crotchets. But your mother's patience, and her gentleness, and her humility, Kitty, and her calmness in danger, I shall never forget. I should be very happy, Kitty," she concluded, "with all my privileges, to be what she is. And how she attained such a height in that benighted region is more than I can comprehend."

"But, dear Aunt Henderson," I ventured to say, "the grace of God can reach even to Cornwall!"

The parting between mother and dear Aunt Jeanie was like a leaving-taking of sisters; and for keepsakes, mother gave a beloved old volume of Mr. George Herbert's hymns, and Aunt Jeanie an old worn copy of the letters of Mr. Samuel Rutherford.

We stayed three or four days at Bath, during which Aunt Beauchamp's spirits revived, and also her colour, and her interest in cards, "For, after all," she observed to mother, "we have our duties to our children, and to society, and there is no religion, at least for us Protestants, in making ourselves scare-crows."

But on the morning we went away, when we went to her bedside to wish her good-bye, she said to mother:

"My dear Sister Trevelyman, if ever I should be ill, for we are mortal, and my nerves have been so terribly shaken, promise me that you will come and see me. For I am sure you would do me more good than any one."

And so we reached home again, and dear mother thinks,—as Evelyn says no doubt the sun does,—that this is a very warm and genial world.

There was a strange tenderness in Aunt Henderson's manner as she took leave of mother and me; and as we sat in the coach at Hackney, waiting

for the horses to start, she came forward again and took mother's hand with a lingering eagerness, as if she had some special last words to say. Yet after all she said nothing, she only murmured, "God bless you both."

And when I glanced back at Cousin Evelyn when we left Bath, expecting one more of her bright looks, she was gazing at mother with a strange wistfulness, and then suddenly she burst into a flood of tears, and turned away.

Can mother, and father, and I have been deceiving ourselves? She says she feels better and stronger, and so often on the journey she used to plan how we would resume all our old habits, and she would rise early again. "There is such life," she said, "in the morning air at home; and then, Kitty, we will read the lessons for the day always together. Perhaps I have not sought the especial blessing promised to the 'two or three gathered together' as I ought. And you shall read me sometimes one of those hymns of Dr. Watts or of Mr. Charles Wesley. I am an old-fashioned old woman, and I shall never be able to understand why people cannot be satisfied with the Bible and the Prayer-Book, nor how they can speak of their inmost feelings in those bands and classes your Aunt Henderson speaks of without danger. But I do like the hymns, and I am sure we ought all to feel grateful to the Methodists for helping the people, no one else ever thought there was any hope of helping, or of teaching anything good."

It was rather a sad greeting the night we came near home. It was growing dusk, and everything was very still, when a low chant broke on us from the opposite hill. Solemnly the measured music rose and fell, like the rise and fall of waves on a calm day, until, as we drew nearer, the hill-side sent the sound back to us so clearly we could distinguish it to be the deep voices of men singing as they moved along the moorland. From the slow, steady movement we knew too well what the sad procession must be. We did not say anything to each other. But when we were sitting at supper in the hall, mother asked Betty which of the neighbours was dead.

"It was old Widow Treffry," said Betty, "and Toby has joined the Methodists lately, and the members of his class carried her to the church yard to-day, singing one of Parson Wesley's hymns as they went."

"It was very solemn and sweet," said mother. "It made me think of the stories my father used to tell me, when I was a child, of the ancient Church and the funeral of the martyrs."

Yesterday afternoon, when mother and I returned from a little walk to the entrance of our cave, where she had rested a little while on a rock, to drink in the air from the sea, which was as soft as milk, and made the heart glad, like wine when one is weary, we found the parlour occupied by our new vicar, Cousin Evelyn's great-uncle. Betty was talking to him at the door; and when he had greeted us, the vicar observed in rather a nervous way to mother.

"Madam, I have been informed that their is a *conventicle* held on Sunday evenings in this house."

Mother coloured, and rose; but it evidently cost the vicar too much to make the assertion not to pursue it: he could not rely on his own courage for a second charge, and accordingly pressed it. "Yes, madam, a conventicle, in which is also perpetrated the further enormity of female preaching. I was also informed that in this conventicle the most pointed allusions are made to the clergy; that it is spoken of as a great marvel that any good gift or grace should be given to the bishops or curates; and that last Sunday evening it was actually stated, in the most offensive manner, that it would be a good thing indeed if the priests showed forth God's glory, either by their preaching or by their living. Madam," concluded the vicar, having, I suppose, exhausted his ammunition, and relapsing into his usual nervous and courteous manner,—"madam, a clergyman, a stranger does not know what to believe. I would have preferred seeing Captain Trevelyman; but since your servant told me he was out, I did not like to wait."

"Sir," said mother, who by this time had resumed her seat and her composure, "you have acted with true courtesy and frankness. On the winter Sunday evenings we have been in the habit of collecting our two servants with a few of our ailing and aged neighbours, to read the Church service to them and some passages from the Homilies."

"The Church service and the Homilies? A very primitive and praiseworthy custom, madam!" said the vicar, evidently greatly relieved, "and only a few aged people, within the legal number, no doubt; not more than thirty-nine?"

"I never counted them, sir," said mother.

"No doubt, my dear madam, no doubt; but you would in future be particular on that score. The times are perilous, madam, and these Methodists seem to have penetrated even here. No doubt my informant was mistaken."

"Perhaps, mother," I ventured to suggest, "the vicar's informant was a Dissenter. You always read the prayer, 'O God, who alone workest great marvels, send down on all bishops and curates,'—and last Sunday father read the Litany,—and you remember 'both by their preaching and living.'"

"Exactly," said the vicar, seizing at the escape, "the young lady's suggestion shows great acuteness. And my informant may himself be a dangerous person, a nonconformist, perhaps even himself a Methodist."

"It is very strange," however, said mother, when the vicar had left, and she related the interview to father, "that any one should confound me with the Methodists, and suspect me of holding conventicles. It is very strange!" repeated mother, in a tone of no little annoyance.

"Very strange, my dear," said father, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye; "but I have always observed it is the cautious people who get into the worst scrapes."

Finding Betty one day in an approachable mood, I took the opportunity of asking what her opinion was on Mr. Wesley's doctrine of "perfection."

"Well, Mrs. Kitty," she said, "I've got my thoughts on that matter. In the first place, my dear, it's my belief when a man's not a fool in general, when you do understand him, it's a wise thing to think he's not a fool when you don't understand him, but to try to make out what he does mean. That's my way: some folks, Mrs. Kitty, go just the other way,—however, that's no concern of mine. Now, my dear, when I heard the folks say that Parson Wesley said there are some poor mortals on earth who've got beyond sinning, I said to myself, Parson Wesley's no fool, that's plain if nothing else is, and he must have some meaning. And so I said to some of the folks, 'Did he say you were perfect and had got beyond sinning?' And when they said 'No,' I said, 'Well, leas'tways, he's right enough there.' And that quieted them for a bit. So I was left to think it out for myself. And, Mrs. Kitty, it's my belief Parson Wesley means this. He has seen, maybe, some folks sit down moaning and groaning over their sins as if their sins were a kind of rheumatism in their bones, and they had nothing to do with it but to bear it. For I've seen such folks, Mrs. Kitty, I can't deny, folks calling themselves Christians, who'd speak of their temptations, or their laziness, or their *flesh*, as they call it, as if their *flesh* were not themselves, but a kind of ill-natured beast they'd got to keep, that would bark and snap at times, and no fault of theirs. Some folks, if you speak to them of their faults, will shake their heads and say, 'Yes, we're poor sinners, and the *flesh* is weak, but when we get to Heaven it'll be all right. We can't expect, you know, to be perfect here.' And if Parson Wesley ever came across such I can fancy his being aggravated terribly, for they be aggravating, and have many a time angered me. And I can fancy his going up to them in his brisk way, and saying, 'You poor, foolish souls, you'll never get to Heaven at all in that way; and if you don't get sin out of your hearts now you'll find it'll be death by-and-bye. Get up and fight with your sins like men. The Almighty never meant you to go on sinning and groaning, and groaning and sinning. He says you are to be *holy*, you're to be *perfect*, and what the Almighty says he means. Get up and try, and you'll find he'll help you.' And if they do try, the Almighty does help them; and instead of keeping on sinning and moaning, they'll be singing and doing right. They'll be loving the Lord and loving each other. And," continued Betty, "that's what I think Parson Wesley means by 'perfection.'"

"Some folks," she resumed after a pause, "seem to think going to Heaven is a kind of change of air, that'll make their bodies well all in a moment. But I don't see that changes of place make the body any better, and I don't see why it should the soul. Parson Wesley says eternity and eternal life, and forgiveness of sins, and holiness, and Heaven itself, must begin in the soul, here and now, or they'll never begin there and then. And," she concluded, "Mrs. Kitty, my dear, that's what Parson Wesley means by 'perfection;' and if he means anything wrong, it's no concern of mine, my dear, for Parson Wesley's not the Bible, and it isn't at his judgment-seat we've got to stand."

(To be continued.)