

The Inglenook.

The Prayer of Faith.

BY MRS. ANNA ROSS.

Bell was a little girl who had a great many perplexities. Prayer was one of them. The promises about prayer seemed so plain, "ask, and it shall be given to you, seek, and ye shall find"—but it seemed so hard to get the answers. Sometimes a sweet prompt answer would come when a thimble was lost, or a difficult task was to be performed. But the sorrowful thing was that many another prayer, just as earnest, and just as truly mixed with an eager hope, which surely has a little faith in it, never was answered at all, as far as she could see. Prayer was such an uncertain thing; sometimes it was answered quickly, and sometimes nobody seemed to hear.

After a while she read a paragraph in an old book which made some things look plainer. "When we pray for earthly blessings, we are asking for that which may or may not be our good. If a poor man asks riches, he cannot be sure that riches would be a blessing, and he should put in this trustful clause, 'if it be according to thy will,' which means in plain English, 'if it is really for my good.' But when we are asking for spiritual blessings we know we are asking what is 'according to His will,' for 'this is His will, even our sanctification.' Therefore we can ask in the simplest confidence that 'He heareth us,' and if we know that He hears us in whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him."

This paragraph helped Bell. She saw the sweetness, even when in the act of asking for a blessing, of trusting God to decide whether it would be a real blessing or not. Then she saw a little of the strength God has given to prayer when we are asking for things that are surely according to His will, because they are according to His promise. A strong, positive faith in such circumstances began to look clearer to her.

But still there was a great perplexity. She asked and asked for spiritual blessings that did not come, and she was driven back constantly to fear that there was something wrong about her prayer, and very soon she found out that that was true.

During summer holidays she and a young friend, whom I shall call Fannie, had undertaken to unite in prayer every Sabbath evening after sunset for a poor dying soldier concerning whom they were much troubled. Bell was much discouraged at her own coldness and unbelief during this little prayer tryst. Fannie she was sure, though far away, was praying earnestly, but her heart always seemed cold and hard as a stone. One evening she said to herself almost pettishly, "Fannie's prayers will do some good, but mine never will." Immediately after that thought came another. "If Fannie's prayers do any good it will simply be on account of the name in which they are offered." Then came a third glad thought. And I have the same name to bring before God, and He will look at that name, and not at me at all." And a new and strong confidence came into prayer by turning God's eye upon the name of Jesus Christ, and hiding all her own badness and goodness to-

gether behind Him. Hiding behind that shield she could pray for precious things and then sing—

"See, God, my Shield, look on the face
Of thine Anointed dear."

Another good lesson was given by a godly minister whose name it is safe to mention, for, after having endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he has now entered into rest. Rev. Robt. Hall, of Missouri, Ont., paid us a brief visit. Talking about prayer in a happy way one day he explained delays and disappointment in this way—

Suppose a great musician were to advertise free tuition to whosoever will, and you eagerly applied to him, asking him to teach you to play Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Suppose he commenced at once explaining to you the names and positions of the notes on the staff. Then you interrupted him saying, "No, this is not what I want, I want to be taught to play the Moonlight Sonata." "All right," he would say, "but this is the beginning, you must begin at the beginning." But you, having your eye upon the finished work and having no mind for the patient learning and the steady drudgery of practice, soon weary of what seemed like an unfulfilled promise and give it up altogether, now, make your own application."

Bell did make her own application. She saw that some of the precious things she had been asking for were like this power to play Beethoven's master pieces, and faith was not so staggered at seeming delays as before.

But a new and wonderful lesson about the prayers of faith came from the 143rd Psalm. It was still in those early days of "trying," when coldness and defeat were the rule, and victory came only once a while to keep from utter discouragement. On beginning to study that Psalm of course she quickly came to the last line of the first verse. "In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness"

"What bold words to take before God,"—these were her thoughts. Does David mean to imply that, for God *not* to answer him would be unfaithfulness, would be positive unrighteousness? At first it seemed wrong even to think such a thought. But the plea was written out in the Bible, and a glimpse was given of the glorious power of it. That was her first lesson on taking a *covenant* hold upon God in prayer—taking hold of His *faithfulness*—taking hold as Jacob did, and saying, I will not let thee go, for I have thy word and it *must* be fulfilled. In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness." Bell saw that she had found a key, a wonderful key. This is the prayer of faith.

All the other lessons were necessary, and preparatory to this. But this is the special characteristic of the prayer of faith. It takes hold of God's faithful word of promise, rests on that faithfulness, presses on that faithfulness, and wins as Jacob did.

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The Pumpkin's Hallowe'en.

It was Hallowe'en and a certain house was filled with dim shadows and figures moving under the ghostly lights, wizard faces gleaming from the walls and ceiling.

Surely there never was such another assortment of faces not even among all the wizards in the land of fables. The mouths of some were drawn up in mild good humor, honest, good-natured pumpkin wizards they. Some again were almost too hilarious, for their mouth circled up nearly to their eyes and presented a very wicked grin, indeed. The corners of others were drawn deplorably down and this cast a most depressing influence on their neighbors.

Two of these faces were busy lighting up a corner where a table was laid adorned with plates of pumpkin pies all ready cut for eating. One was a very jolly old fellow, indeed, but the other looked down on the pies as if the very thought of them filled him with the pains of dyspepsia.

"What makes you look so down in the mouth?" said Platter face to his melancholy friend, for they had grown in the same cornfield; had undergone like operations recently under the same skillful surgeon, and so were always sympathetic one with the other.

"I don't know," was the answer, "unless it is that I am heartily disgusted with all these people. They think no one lives but themselves—selfish things! and here they chop and hack us up and spoil our lovely existence just for one night of pleasure to them. We are called upon to sacrifice our lives that we may light up their gay gambols."

"Well, we mustn't complain," answered Platter face, who was inclined to look on the bright side. "I think how it would be to be treated like Brother Curlstem. I was sitting in the kitchen, filled with horror at the thought of the operation I was to undergo, for the boys would talk of it continually before us, but when I saw what happened to Brother Curlstem, I determined I would be thankful for even my lot—so I have deliberately and resolutely grinned ever since."

"Why, what was it?" inquired the other, with melancholy interest—and good natured Platter face was about to proceed when a thin, weak voice interrupted, and they both started and strained their glaring eyes into the dimness below.

"No, neither of you should be complaining if you have your heads punched and candles in 'em. Think of me. I have been peeled; yes, every bit of my skin pulled off. Then I was cut up and put into an iron thing and boiled and boiled. Think of it! What are candles to that! Then what must they do but pound me with a stick until my only way of escape was to crawl through some small holes and drop into a great darkness below. Oh, how frightened I was! and how I hoped that they would not find my hiding place. But, oh me! they hunted me down even there and stirred me up with a lot of hot stuff, until my senses fairly whirled."

"Then I thought they might have left me in peace, but no. I was deluged with milk, whipped with a spoon, and at last I gave up in despair and lost consciousness entirely until the heat of an awful place I found myself in partially restored me and I was compelled to think again. It was dreadful! It makes me perspire now to think of it, but I was so in taken out and allowed to cool off down cellar. I had begun to hope that there might yet be a little happiness left in life, when they carried me up again and now they say I am to be eaten, actually eaten! Can you imagine a fate more horrible?"

"Yes, here comes that monster even now with the frightful mouth and the red mustache and he has his eyes on me. So, farewell, dear brothers. I hope you will be too