

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TODAY. BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NPLI," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

By this time they had reached the drawing-room. "What is it, Dr. Black—what is the matter?" asked Miss Denston, nervously, as soon as they entered.

"It is a touch of inflammation of the lungs, George," replied Hester. She was very pale, but calm and self-possessed as usual. "And there is a great deal of nursing to be done."

The doctor wrote a prescription, and the address of two or three nursing institutions, questioned Miss Denston as to hereditary disease, and the past physical history of the patient, to which he received answers which were very encouraging, and gave fuller directions about treatment.

Then he took his departure, and the full realization of her responsibilities fell upon Hester. Miss Denston was scarcely less upon her hands than her brother. She was in a state of great agitation.

The first thing to be done was to run home, and get all the things for it suddenly struck Hester that her mother would come in and do what was necessary till the nurse could be procured.

Grace would go for the nurse, no doubt, and Hester could return and help her mother and take care of Miss Denston. Miss Denston, meanwhile, had better see the landlady, and make arrangements with her concerning the bedroom which must be got ready.

This plan she sketched rapidly to Miss Denston, as she put on her hat and jacket. But when she reached home she learned, to her dismay, that her mother had just gone out.

Grace was at home, and quite ready to set off at once in search of a nurse. Then Hester hurried back again, having given Sarah directions to let her know as soon as her mother returned.

She found that affairs had progressed in her absence. A room was happily vacant on the floor above the drawing-room, and a fire had been lit there.

Thither Hester repaired, to find a smoky fire in a very small grate. This she coaxed and tended, and then bethought herself of what ought to be done to make the room suitable for an abode of sickness.

Was the bed aired? She had better see the landlady about that, and, in any case, it should be warmed—the servant must bring a warming-pan.

Hester pressed her hands to her temples as she stood looking round the room. She had never had such responsibility upon her shoulders before.

And there was involved in it more than responsibility. These petty details of arrangements were invested with something approaching to solemnity.

Mr. Denston was dangerously ill—that meant in danger of death. There was no personal feeling in Hester's mind towards the patient, to distract by any keen pain or desperate anxiety from the sense of awe which enveloped him with a strange mystic interest.

Hester experienced a kind of exaltation of mind as she moved about the room, clearing the table and mantelshelf of superfluous ornaments, and arranging the furniture as it seemed to her would be most convenient, which inspired her movements, usually characterized by a slow grace, with vigour, and brought fire into her calm eyes.

Then she went down to the drawing-room and said she must see the landlady. Miss Denston feared that person would object to be sent for twice in the same morning; but in the end the bell was rung, and a message sent to her.

She appeared puffing and panting from the ascent of the stairs—a fat elderly person, with a gay cap, and hands just rubbed out of flour.

"May I trouble you to come up stairs with me for a few minutes?" said Hester; "I am very sorry to disturb you."

The landlady was struck with Hester's manner. It was dignified and condescending, with a touch of graceful apology, which contrasted with a practical world obliged Hester to substitute for her usual haughty. Mrs. Wilson had been cook in "good families," and was sensitive to a lady's manner.

She said—"Certainly, ma'am; don't mention it," and the two went up into the bedroom.

"Now I must tell you, Mrs. Wilson," said Hester, "that Mr. Denston is dangerously ill, much worse than his sister imagines; and we must not let her know this, because of her own delicate health."

she received the theory that pity unalloyed with contempt is in a woman's breast closely allied with affection, and is a chord that can scarcely be struck without the other vibrating also.

Denston smiled faintly, and said—"Thank you. I am engaged in realising for the first time the rotary motion of the earth."

"Ah, poor soul! he's wandering," said the landlady to Hester, under her breath.

Denston gave a short laugh, which resulted in a cough, which made Hester tremble, and caused her to be doubly thankful when the patient was safely established in the room below.

When Hester went into the room he was shivering very much, and with a beating heart she piled on blankets and stirred the fire, fearing that she had done badly, and that he had taken a chill.

But he soon began to feel comfortable again, and then Hester poured out a dose of the medicine, which had just arrived. He had been watching her silently, as she moved about, and now, when she held out the glass to him, he said—

"Oh, dear, what trouble I am giving! Is all this necessary?"

Sick people are supposed to have re-entered childhood for the nonce, and women instinctively speak to them maternally. Hester, who had never been nurse before, spoke so to the sick man.

"You need not trouble yourself about anything. Just do all that you can to get better. That is what we all want."

Denston looked at her with a languid surprise in his eyes, which brought a faint flush into Hester's face, but did not reply otherwise than by drinking the medicine Hester held out to him.

"How is Georgina?" he asked, as Hester took the glass, "not worrying herself, I hope?"

"She is, of course, anxious about you," said Hester, quietly.

"I believe I am very ill," said Denston, dubiously, adding quickly, "but you need not tell her so."

"She knows you are very ill, and means to take great care of you. But I think you must not talk."

The blood rushed to Hester's cheeks, and her heart seemed for a moment to stop beating at the next question.

"Does the doctor say I am likely to die?" How ought she to answer? She felt that her face was being examined.

"I really don't know what Georgina would do," continued Denston, as though he had gathered his conclusion. He had contracted his brows painfully, like one possessed by anxious thought.

This would not do. Hester rallied her forces. "But you will not die. We will nurse you well, and you will try to get well."

Denston smiled so mournfully that the tears which were near the surface in Hester's excited mood rose to her eyes.

"Shall I?" he said. The tone was faintly humorous, but in some way there was implied, or so it seemed to Hester, an indifference in the matter, born of a joyless life.

"For your sister's sake, at least," she said, gently.

"Yes, yes," said Denston, with a weary accent. He turned away his head and said no more. For her sake a good many things had had to be done.

Hester went away to report the progress of affairs to Miss Denston, and also to find out if her mother had returned. As she did so, she was conscious of the growth of a new pain at her heart, whose birth dated from the early morning, when her friend had greeted her, but which at present she had no time to heed.

Hester met her mother at the street door, and explained to her what was needed. Mrs. Norris entered into the affair with gentle alacrity, and expressed kind feeling towards the brother and sister, though perhaps regret that she had not been on the spot earlier to relieve Hester from her trying position predominated.

But kind as her mother was, Hester was conscious of an importance in the experiences of her morning, which her mother did not enter into. It seemed as though a very wide interval stretched between the meeting with her mother and the last parting, though in point of time it was represented by an hour or two.

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Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

SECOND QUARTER.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

LESSON VII., May 16th, John iv., 43-54; memorize verses 48-51.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth."—John iv., 50.

TIME.—January, A.D. 23. Soon after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Cana and Capernaum in Galilee.

CIRCUMSTANCES.—Jesus remained two days at Sychar in Samaria after his conversation with the woman at Jacob's well. Then he went on to Galilee as he proposed when he left Judaea, and continuing his journey northward, he arrived at Cana in Galilee, where Nathanael, one of his disciples, had a home.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—43. Thence: from Sychar. 44. A prophet hath no honour, etc.: Jesus gives this as a reason for coming into Galilee. (1) Either his own country means Judaea, his religious home; or (2) it means Nazareth, and gives the reason why he went to other parts of Galilee; or (3) it means Galilee, and means that Jesus had no honour there till he had acquired it in Judaea. Then the Galileans received him. 45. At the feast: chap. ii., 13-25. 46. Water wine: chap. ii., 1-11. Nobleman: one who belonged to the king's court. 47. Come down: Capernaum was 1350 feet lower than Cana. 48. Except ye see signs: they did not care enough for the truth itself, but wanted outward wonders. Wonders were good to aid faith, but the mind longing for spiritual life and for God, was better. 52. Yesterday, at the seventh hour: 7 o'clock in the evening, Roman time, as is usual in John. (The Jewish notation would be 1 o'clock, 7 hours from sunrise.) The nobleman and his servants started the next morning, and met between Cana and Capernaum. 53. The father knew: the sameness of the hour showed that the healing was through the power of Jesus. Himself believed: not only believed his word as before, but accepted him as the true Messiah, as his Saviour and teacher.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—v. 44.—Signs and wonders as aids to faith.—The nobleman.—The progress of his faith.—Jesus healing at a distance, then and now.—Jesus still healing and helping.—What is it to believe on Jesus?

LEARN BY HEART Heb. xl., 1; Ps. 103; 1-4. QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Where was the scene of our last lesson? On what subject did Jesus give a lesson to his disciples? How long did Jesus remain at Sychar? What was the result of his labours there?

SUBJECT: FAITH AND ITS REWARDS.

I. FAITH'S FOUNDATION (vs. 43-45, 48).—Where did Jesus go from Sychar? To what town? What reason does he give in v. 44 for going there? Where was his own country? How was he treated in Galilee? What reason did they have for their faith? Are signs and wonders a good reason for believing? Is there any better foundation for faith? Why is a prophet without honour in his own country?

II. FAITH LEADING TO JESUS (vs. 46-49).—What man in a distant city heard of Jesus? What need had he of help? Did he have any faith? What did it lead him to do? How long was the journey? At what time of the day did he arrive? (v. 52.) How did he show the earnestness of his faith?

III. FAITH REWARDED (vs. 50-54).—What did Jesus do for him? How could he heal a person so far away? Did he believe Jesus? How did he show his faith? Who met him on the way home? With what message? How did he learn for certain that it was Jesus who had healed his son? How did this increase his faith? What is the difference between the faith when it is said himself believed and the faith referred to in vs. 48 and 50? Did he now become a real Christian? What do you learn from this as to what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? What qualities do you find in this nobleman's faith? Was more faith one of the rewards for believing at first? What other rewards had he? What teaching as to Christ's power to help do you find that will be a comfort to you? Can Jesus heal our sicknesses?

LESSONS FROM THE CAPERNAUM NOBLEMAN.

I. That we should take our cares and sicknesses and troubles to Jesus.

II. That as he did so much for his sick son, so our heavenly Father is ready with his loving help to us in our needs.

III. All that God has done for others strengthens our faith that he will help us.

IV. He that has any true faith will act upon that faith.

V. He that acts up to his faith will gain more faith.

VI. God will give us our desire if it is best for our spiritual good.

VII.—God's answer to our prayers for temporal blessings increases our faith in him as our Saviour and teacher.

REVIEW EXERCISE.—(For the whole school in concert).—1. Where did Jesus go from Sychar? ANS. He went to Cana in Galilee. 2. Who heard of his arrival? ANS. A nobleman of Capernaum, who had a son at the point of death. 3. What did he do? ANS. He went up to Cana to entreat Jesus to go and heal his son. 4. What did Jesus do for him? ANS. He made his son well without going where he was. 5. What was the result? ANS. The whole family became Christians.

WONDERFULLY CANDID.

THE liquor dealers of Mexico are wonderfully candid, as well as decidedly prosperous. Bishop Haven describes some illustrations of this which met his eye in Guanajato.

"One thing does flourish, if the church does not—the liquor saloons. Here, as everywhere the world over, the chief of devils is drink: but here, unlike the States, it assumes its true name. See that one on the chief street, rightly named 'El Delirio' (The Delirium); and this is 'La Tentacion' with two admiration points—(The Temptation!). Well named. I have seen one entitled 'El Abismo' (Hell). If our beer and whisky saloons were equally honest, some of their victims might be saved from temptation, delirium and Hell, which they now, under false pretences, too surely bestow."—Home Missionary.