

WAITING FOR THE GRIST.

"It is strange," said a gentleman who sat next to me in the car, and with whom I had struck up quite an acquaintance, "what an influence, a look, a word, or the little act of a perfect stranger will sometimes have upon a person."

"Yes," said I; "more than any of us realize."

"It was the simple act of a stranger that changed the whole course of my life."

"Indeed! How so?"

"When I was a boy my father moved to the then far west—Ohio. It was before the days of steam, and no great mills thundered on her river banks, but occasionally there was a little grist mill by the side of some small stream, and hither, whenever the water was up, the whole neighbourhood flocked with their sacks of corn. 'First come, first served.' Sometimes we had to wait two or three days for our turn. I generally was the one sent from our house, for while I was too small to be of much account on the farm, I was as good as a man to carry a grist to mill. So I was not at all surprised one morning when my father said, 'Harry, you can get up Old Roan and go to mill to-day.'"

"Saunders' mill was ten miles away; but I had made the trip so often that it did not seem far. I believe one becomes more attached to an old mill than to any other building. I can see just how it looked as it stood there under the sycamores, with its huge wheel and rough clapboard sides."

"When I arrived, I found the North Branch and the Rocky Fork folks there ahead of me, and I knew there was no hope of getting home that day; but I was not at all sorry, for my basket was well filled with provisions, and Mr. Saunders always opened his big barn for us to sleep in, so it was no unpleasant time we had while waiting for our grist. This time there was an addition to the number that had been in the habit of gathering, from time to time, in the old Saunders barn—a young fellow about my age, probably a little older. His name was Charley Allen, and his father had bought a farm over on the Brush Creek road. He was sociable and friendly, but I instinctively felt that he had 'more manners' than the rest of us. The evening was spent, as usual, in relating coarse jokes and playing cards. Although I was not accustomed to such things at home, I had become so used to it that it had long since ceased to shock me, and, indeed, I was fast becoming a very interested spectator."

"Well, boys, it is time for us fellows to go to roost," said Jim Finley, one of the greatest roughs on the Rocky Fork, as he threw down his pack of cards and began to undress. We all followed his example, although it was not much undressing we did to sleep on the hay mow; but we were so busy with our own affairs that we did not notice Charley Allen until Jim exclaimed: 'Heydey! we've got a parson here; we hev!' Charley was kneeling by the oats bin, praying. Jim Finley's jest met with no response. The silence was only broken by the drowsy cattle below, and the twittering swallows overhead. More than one rough man wiped a tear from his eyes as he went silently to bed on the hay. I had always been in the habit of praying at home, but I never thought of such a thing at Saunders' mill. As I lay awake that night in the old barn, thinking of Charley Allen's courage, and what an effect it had upon the men, I firmly resolved that in the future I would do right. I little thought how soon my courage would be tested. Just after dinner I got my grist, and started for home. When I arrived at Albright's gate, where I turned off to go home, I found the old squire waiting for me. I saw in a moment that something had gone wrong. I had always stood in the greatest awe of the old gentleman, because he was the rich man of the neighbourhood, and now I felt my heart beginning to beat very fast. As soon as I came near he said, 'Did you go through this gate yesterday?' I could easily have denied it; as it was before daylight when I went through, and I quite as often went the other way. Charley Allen kneeling in the barn came to my mind like a flash, and before I had time to listen to the tempter I said: 'Yes, sir; I did!'

"Are you sure you shut and pinned the gate?" he asked.

"This question staggered me. I remembered distinctly that I did not. I could pull the pin out without getting off my horse, but I could not put it in again; so I carelessly rode away, and left it open."

"I—I—I—"

"But with it; tell just what you did!"

"I left it open," I said, abruptly.

"Well, you let the cattle in, and they have destroyed all my early potatoes—a terrible piece of business!"

"I'm very sorry, I'd—"

"Talking won't help matters now; but remember, boy, remember that sorrow don't make potatoes."

"I felt very badly about the matter, for I was really sorry that the old gentleman had lost his potatoes, and then I expected to be severely reprimanded at home; but I soon found that they knew nothing of the matter, and after several days had passed, I began to rest quite easy. Alas for human hopes, one rainy afternoon I saw the squire riding down the lane. I ran off to the barn, ashamed to face him, and afraid to meet my father. They sat on the porch and talked for a long time. At last my curiosity overcame my fear, and I stole back to the house, and went into my mother's room to see if I could hear what they were talking about. 'Why, the boy could be spared well enough, but he don't know anything about the business,' said my father. 'There is one thing he does know,' said the squire, 'he knows how to tell the truth.' He then related the circumstances which I so much dreaded to have my father hear. After he had gone, my father called me to him and told me that the squire was going to start a store in the village, and wanted a boy to help, and that I could go if I wanted to. I went, and remained in the village store until it blossomed out into a city store; and people say that I got my start in life when I entered Albright's store; but I will always maintain that I got it while I was waiting for the grist."—S. S. Times.

TOO CERTAIN

"Father, I am tired of reading the Bible. I have read it so often that I know everything in it."

"Everything, my son? Do you think you could not find one chapter that would contain something you have never yet noticed?"

"Yes, father, I think so. I am sure I know all that is in the historical parts of the Bible."

"Well, let me try you. When were a large number of men fed with a few loaves of bread, and a supply left when they had done eating?"

"Why, father, surely I remember Christ's feeding several thousand persons, at two different times, with a few loaves and fishes."

"Very well; those are two instances. Now tell me a third."

"There is no other in the Bible."

"You are perfectly sure of that, are you? Suppose you reflect a little before you answer again."

"Yes, father, I have thought, and I am certain there is no other miracle of the kind mentioned in the Bible."

"Well, my son, open your Bible at the fourth chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings."

"The Fourth Book of Kings: Father, there is no such book."

"Hand me the Bible. What does this title say?"

"It is 'The Second Book of the Kings, commonly called The Fourth Book of the Kings.'"

"Well, there is one thing learned by the boy that knew the Bible so well! Now turn to the fourth chapter, and read from the forty-second verse."

"Here it is, sir: 'And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God—'

"Who was that man of God?"

"I must look. It was the prophet Elisha."

"Now proceed."

"And brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What! should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, they shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord."

"That will do for this time, my son. I have never wished to make the reading of the Scriptures tedious by requiring you to read them continually, without giving you other books to read. But I wanted to convince you how mistaken young people are apt to be in their ideas of their own knowledge. There are thousands of children—yes, and of men and women too—who would read with great interest many passages of the Bible if they found them in a fresh and beautiful

volume which they believed to contain nothing but what was published for the first time. Remember this, and let me advise you to read the four books of Kings, and to make a list of all the passages you will find there, which, like the one you just read, are as new to you as if you had never heard nor read them."—*Sailors' Magazine*.

THE INCONSISTENCY OF AGNOSTICISM.

How can it be true that man is so outside of that unity that the very notion of seeing anything like himself in it is the greatest of all philosophical heresies? Does not the very possibility of stability of science consist in the possibility of reducing all natural phenomena to purely mental conceptions, which must be related to the intellect of man when they are worked out and apprehended by it? And if, according to the latest theories, man is himself a product of evolution, and is, therefore, in every atom of his body and in every function of his mind, a part and a child of nature, is it not in the highest degree illogical so to separate him from it as to condemn him for seeing in it some image of himself? If he is its product and its child, is it not certain that he is right when he sees and feels the indissoluble bonds of unity which unite him to the great system of things in which he lives? This fundamental inconsistency in the Agnostic philosophy becomes the more remarkable when we find that the very men who tell us we are not one with anything above us, are the same who insist that we are one with everything beneath us. Whatever there is in us or about us which is purely animal we may see everywhere; but whatever there is in us purely intellectual and moral, we delude ourselves if we think we see it anywhere. There are abundant homologies between our bodies and the bodies of the beasts, but there are no homologies between our minds and any mind which lives or manifests itself in nature. Our livers and our lungs, our vertebrae and our nervous systems, are identical in origin and in function with those of the living creatures round us; but there is nothing in nature or above it which corresponds to our forethought, or design, or purpose—to our love of the good or our admiration of the beautiful—to our indignation with the wicked, or to our pity for the suffering and the fallen. I venture to think that no system of philosophy that has ever been taught on earth lies under such a weight of antecedent improbability; and this improbability increases in direct proportion to the success of science in tracing the unity of nature, and in shewing, step by step, how its laws and their results can be brought more and more into direct relation with the mind and intellect of man.—*The Duke of Argyll in the Contemporary Review*.

WE can do nothing now to build the stairs and gates [of heaven], but by God's grace we can do much, very much, now to begin to become the men and women to whom one day heaven shall be possible.—*Rev. Philips Brooks*.

GOD knows what keys in the human soul to touch in order to draw out its sweetness and most perfect harmonies. They may be the minor strains of sadness and sorrows; they may be the lofty notes of joy and gladness. God knows where the melodies of our nature are, and what discipline will bring forth. Some with plaintive tongue must walk in lowly vales, of weary way; others in loftier hymns sing nothing but joy; but they all unite without discord or jar as the ascending anthem of loving and believing hearts finds its way into the chorus of the redeemed, to heaven.

Al! If Jesus Christ were to require you to exchange the general good opinion which you enjoy for the humiliations of His life and the opprobrium of His death, the riches which abound in your houses for the abasement and destitution of His poverty; that comfortable life, that delicate bringing up, all those desires gratified as soon as formed, for the privations, the disquietudes, the sufferings of the body, the intense solicitude, or the sweet society of those dearly-loved ones who are the delight of your eyes and the joy of your hearts, for separation, bereavement, and bitter solitude, do you think within yourselves that you would be ready to bear the loss of all things so that you may win Christ? If you inwardly answer, "This is a hard saying; who can bear it?" all is said. I do not here decide whether your soul can be saved such as you are; but it is very certain, such as you are, you will not be a follower of St. Paul.