

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TO-DAY. BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NELL," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.—Continued.

"It has been so strange that Hester's intimate friend should be unknown to me—you have been a kind of Mrs. Harris, you know," and Grace laughed.

Miss Denston smiled faintly, and only replied, "Give my love to dear Hester. I know she will be sorry to have been out when I needed her."

There was a peculiar suggestion of appropriation in the tone in which this was said, which impressed Grace with surprise, and a shadow of annoyance, and which she felt could not be warranted. She turned to Philip Denston, who was standing near, and said—

"Will you let me give you some sal-volatile for use to-night?" we have some in the house I know, if you would not mind coming over with me for it."

"Thank you," Denston said. "I will come with you."

The two passed out together into a clear moonlit night. Denston drew a long breath, and looked up at the sky, where the clouds were scudding before the wind.

"This is refreshing," he said. "Yes, the atmosphere of your room is very oppressive," said Grace. "Is it good for your sister? Do you like it? I could scarcely breathe."

He gave a short laugh. "Why, your sister enjoys it, I fancy." "Our tastes are not at all the same," said Grace, emphatically.

"You do seem to differ, certainly." "Do you think women all alike, then, that you seem so surprised?" asked Grace, merrily. "Are they not?"

Grace had knocked, and she now heard steps coming along the passage which were certainly not Kitty's; and being engaged in wondering what could be the meaning of this, she scarcely at the time heard Mr. Denston's dry question, though afterwards it came back to her recollection.

But in order to explain the meaning of this sound which so surprised Grace, we must recount what had happened to Kitty in her absence. For the first quarter of an hour all went well in No. 47, nor deserted by so many of its inmates. Kitty read her book, and thought the time would very quickly pass until Grace's return. She had tried to think of something nice, and rather naughty, to do, such an unsuspected opportunity being rare, but no pleasant mischief had suggested itself; besides which anything which involved an excursion into dark and lonely regions would have been a doubtful joy. At the end of the second quarter of an hour Kitty thought she heard a noise, and she put down her book to listen. Mr. Waterhouse was not stirring; all was silent. Could it be possible he had gone out without being heard? The clock on the stairs seemed to be ticking in a quite extraordinary fashion; it had certainly never made such a noise before. She was not frightened, but she began to feel as if she knew what it would be like to be frightened. She hummed a little bit of a hymn tune, but the sound of her own voice was surprisingly unpleasant, so she stopped. She soon began to feel obliged to persuade herself that she was not frightened, and, when that stage was come, Kitty's nerve was gone. Towards the end of the third quarter of an hour she did hear a noise, real and not imaginary. Mr. Waterhouse had opened his door, and was coming down-stairs; he must be going out. Oh, terror! that could not be allowed! Kitty flew to the door. Yes, there he was, taking his stick from the umbrella stand.

"Oh, please," she cried, with a little pant, "would you mind not going out? I should be so frightened!" There was a very dim light in the passage (for economy's sake) and, for a moment, Waterhouse did not understand the position of affairs.

"Is that Miss Kate?" he asked, coming forward. "What is that you say—that you are frightened?" He actually took both Kitty's hands in his own, and drew her into the parlour.

"Oh! what would Grace say to this?" flashed through Kitty's mind; but at present she was too glad to be comforted to think much of retribution.

"And have they left you all alone in the house?" he continued, looking down at her with kindly amusement, just like the big elder brother that Kitty had always longed to have, and for which longing she had been so often laughed at by her elder sisters.

"Grace and I were left at home to keep house," she replied, looking up, blushing, but frankly; "but Grace has been called out to see some one who is ill, and who lives opposite."

Here Waterhouse nodded, as if he understood all about this some one.

"She will not be long, if you would not mind staying in till she comes. But perhaps you were going out to do something important," Kitty added, timidly.

"Not I," said Waterhouse, with a reassuring smile. "I was only going to post some letters." He put down his hat and stick, which he had brought in with him, on the table, and said—

"And now, Miss Kate, in return for my protection, how are you going to entertain me?"

"Oh! please," said Kitty, impulsively, "my name is not Kate—nobody calls me Kate, and I don't like it at all."

"Why, what is it then?"

"Kitty," said the little maiden, who had all at once recovered her self-consciousness, and spoke in a shamefaced voice, with downcast eyes.

"May I call you Kitty? That's capital! I am sure we shall be friends," said Waterhouse, seating himself before the fire, and drawing Kitty to a chair, with friendly pressure.

Oh! what would Grace say when she came to know that Kitty had given the lodger leave to drop the formal "miss," and call her by her pet household name? And she had never—no, never!—meant him to stay down here in the parlour. Would Grace find him here? All the comfort of Mr. Waterhouse's presence fled before this terrible thought.

"Won't you play to me?" asked Waterhouse, glancing towards the open piano.

"O, I don't play much," said Kitty, blushing; "it is Hester who plays so well. She teaches me."

"Oh, it is Hester who plays, is it? That is the tall sister, isn't it? And doesn't your sister Grace play?"

"She is not so clever in that, though she is in everything else," replied Kitty, warming up and opening her eyes wide. "Grace can do anything she likes."

"And what does she like to do?" Waterhouse looked a very interested listener, and an interested listener on a favourite topic is inspiring.

"Oh, she likes reading French and German when we can get the books; that is in the clever way, you know; but she likes cooking, and that kind of thing, quite as much, if not more."

"Cooking?" "Yes, she does all the cooking neatly."

"Does she cook my dinners?" "Oh, I ought not to have said that," said Kitty, recollecting herself.

"Why not?" asked Waterhouse, but he did not press his question, seeing Kitty's confusion. "But at least you could sing me a hymn," he said. "I am not a great critic—come," and he rose and went to the piano. Kitty followed, feeling that after all there would be less fear of her committing herself there than in conversation. So she found a hymn and began to sing it, and Waterhouse added the bass, and a very mellow pleasant bass it was. When it was finished he said, stretching himself comfortably in his chair—

"Now, this is pleasant; why, you might be my little sister."

Kitty smiled shyly, but she was finding it very pleasant too. Grace said it was not nice to have anything to do with men, but Kitty was beginning to disagree with her. Everything about Mr. Waterhouse was nice—seemed, that is, so strong and easy and kind, with a certain difference from anything she was accustomed to—a difference altogether pleasing. She looked at the muscular vigorous hand which rested on the piano-lid. What a different hand from Hester's long white one, or Grace's tiny brown smooth one, or her own, which was not very pretty at present! There was something quite fascinating for her in watching its movements. But when would Grace come back? And at the very moment, as if in answer to the question, there came a knock at the street door, which could be no other than Grace's. Kitty's heart began to flutter wildly.

"Oh! Grace has come back now; hadn't you better go up-stairs?" desperation lending her the courage to suggest the course.

But the lodger said, "No! why should I?" and gave her a surprised glance, which made poor Kitty feel that she had suggested something rather mean.

"I'll go to the door," continued Mr. Waterhouse; and he strode off before Kitty could regain enough presence of mind to stop him.

When Grace saw who it was that opened the door for her, she exclaimed—

"Oh, Mr. Waterhouse! I am sorry you should have been troubled. Where is Kitty?"

"I have been sitting with her; she was a little timid—Hullo! Why, is it you?" he cried, as Grace's companion came forward into the light.

"Do you live in this part of the world?" "I live over the way," said Denston.

"Capital! you must come and see me in my rooms up-stairs. Miss Norris, I owe this fellow a grudge, for I kept him waiting four hours for me the other evening, and my conscience still smarted at the remembrance. Can you come up now, Mr. Denston, or are you engaged with Norris?"

Denston explained the circumstances which he had left home, but promised to drop some early evening, and Waterhouse went out to post his letters.

"That is a good-hearted fellow," said Denston, in a kind of abrupt confidential burst.

"Oh, he is too rich," replied Grace, carelessly. "You do not like rich people?"

"I have not had much to do with them," Grace laughed. "I don't think I am sorry."

"That is a strange distaste for a woman."

"I don't think you know much about women, Mr. Denston," Grace replied, in a tone which had a little rebuff in it.

Denston had the sal-volatile now, and he took his leave with thanks and a bow to Grace which included Kitty, who had been looking on very much surprised. Then came Kitty's explanation, which ended piteously.

"Oh, Grace, I could not help it, could I? I could not know he would have come in here."

"No, I suppose not, you little *maladroite*."

Kitty got no further scolding, but Grace shrugged her shoulders and muttered, "The thin edge of the wedge."

CHAPTER X.

A BREACH HEALED.

When Hester came home and heard of what had happened in her absence, she did not say very much: the fact being that she hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry, that the long postponed introduction of her friend to the acquaintance of the family had taken place. It was well that the really inevitable ordeal had been gone through, but she shrank painfully from the lively comments likely to adorn Grace's tale, and the future references to be made by that young mocker, for Hester was not without unacknowledged misgivings that her friend had vulnerable points. But Grace was unusually sober about the matter, and told her story in quite a matter-of-fact way. Possibly, in her heightened colour and apprehensive glance, Hester made evident her sensitiveness, and Grace never used barbed arrows.

"I am glad you have seen Hester's friend," said Mrs. Norris. "I think it is much better for us to know them."

"I am sure they are interesting people," said Grace, "though I saw so little of them, I could be quite sure they were not commonplace."

"Friends," repeated Hester, with emphasis; "and they! I know very little of Miss Denston's brother, and have no wish to know more."

"He has not the most genial of manners, certainly, but I liked his attentiveness to his sister and his evident giving up of his tastes to hers."

Hester smiled. "You do not seem to have read his character very cleverly."

"Then, is it weakness that induces him to sit without remonstrance in that stifling atmosphere, and to stay at home nursing his sister? If so, it is rather pitiable."

Hester paused for a moment before replying, as if dismissing all arguments, "I dislike him." She felt a reluctance to disclose her friend's confidence concerning her brother's conduct and disposition. Whatever impressions Grace had formed of Miss Denston's character, on being brought into personal relations with her, and whether they confirmed or corrected former ones, she was quite silent on the subject. Hester felt grateful to her

for so much reticence, for it would have been painful to her to have Miss Denston discussed in the family, and the feeling gave a fresh impulse to the better understanding which seemed insensibly to have sprung up of late between the two. What that better understanding consisted in, and what had been its origin, it would be hard to say; but when our hearts of a sudden turn with more loving comprehension to those who live at our side, is it generally a definite explanation that does the work? No more than it is a definite quarrel which causes the estrangement. There is a little rift within the lute, and the result is broken music, and the rift comes one knows not how. And so too comes the mending—a glance, a loving touch, or tone, and we are at one again; thus slight and immaterial are the links between spirit and spirit, and yet stronger and more enduring than cable-chain when life's strain comes to test them. Then why should we play with our love as some of us do, humour a slight here, or a jealousy there, until we learn to doubt whether we love at all? Like chaff before the wind does all such flimsy substance fly when the storms of life beat down upon us; then we find that love is founded on a rock. Let us then in fair weather take all the sweet daily comfort of our familiar household love, and mar it by no wanton small misgivings. But in love we need much trust or the love will be a wavering, self-tormenting thing. Hester had little trust, and Grace had much, therefore Hester required many proofs and constant signs of the love that Grace was content to know was there. And the improvement in their relations just now was due to the little awakening Hester had given to Grace's perceptions the day of the discussion concerning Mr. Waterhouse. Grace had felt for long that all was not right with Hester, but Hester herself had taken care that no one should see into her heart. But she had allowed Grace that day a little peep into that closely-shut region, and Grace, though little guessing all that lay therein, sought to atone and comfort by an unwontedly caressing manner.

A day or two after this Sunday evening, she came upon Hester seated alone in the twilight, her hands folded before her, and her face turned to the fire, obviously lost in melancholy reverie. Grace came behind and put her two hands on Hester's shoulders.

"Here is Hester, spinning her cobwebs as usual," she exclaimed, lightly. Hester imprisoned the small brown hands, whose touch was as light and quick as a bird's, in her own large and more reposeful ones.

"And here is Peasblossom, as usual, come to blow them away," she said, smiling.

Grace broke away, and came round to Hester's side and seated herself.

"Before I blow them away, let me know what they were."

Hester sighed—"Only thoughts of nothing in particular."

"But you looked melancholy."

"Did I?"

"You are always melancholy, aren't you, Hester?"

Hester's sensitive ear caught a suggestion of banter in the tone, and she coloured.

"And you, Grace, you are always merry."

"Which is best?"

"I would choose never to feel anything but as you do."

There was a pause. Then Grace said, in a changed tone, "there are few people, I should think, who have nothing to sadden them; but real troubles do not make one melancholy; they are too bad for that; it is only sentimental troubles one likes to dwell on. You are often suffering from *sehnsüchtheit*, Hester, and every one has to dread that weird when young."

Grace spoke in a tone of quiet conviction, and Hester, who was given to feeling that Grace was very young, and that she herself was much beyond her sister in maturity of experience, found herself suddenly impressed, without her will, by a sense that Grace was very far beyond her on the path of life. She had before now experienced this sudden sensation, which was as if a glittering surface were to part and for a moment reveal depths below. When Hester's best feelings were called out she was very generous, and there was something in Grace's manner which did call forth the best in her; in spite of what she might have resented in it as patronage. Her criticism was disarmed. She felt, without reasoning, that she had been unjust to Grace. She leaned forward and rested her two arms on Grace's knee, and looked up into her face with a rush of emotion which she could never have expressed in words. Her usually expressionless face was beautiful, flooded, as it was, by appealing and remorseful affection. She was, at last, turning to Grace to help her against the very disaffection which had been subtly creeping over her feelings towards her. The two looked at each other for some moments, Grace's eyes compelled by the yearning gaze of the other, and though she could not understand all there was in it, she had not a nature which could be unmoved by its magnetic power. Then they kissed each other, and sat silently for a time. Not a word more was said. Two minutes had gone by, in which two girls had kissed each other. That was all that had passed in the outward world, but spiritual experience does not measure itself by the clock.

Philip Denston kept the promise he had made to Waterhouse of coming to see him. The first time Waterhouse was out; the second call was more successful. The clock was striking nine as he was shown into the drawing-room Number 47. He apologized for the lateness of the hour. "I seldom leave work before eight," he said.

Waterhouse stared at him. "And what time do you begin?"

"At nine. I often box the compass from nine to nine." He added, seeing considerable surprise in Waterhouse's face, "That's not in the routine, of course. It includes extra work—copying."

"Copying! Goodness, what drudgery!"

(To be continued.)

"It is HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP."—Not long ago we asked a brother why he did not take part in the prayer-meetings of our church. To which he replied that he was so constituted that he could not do it from sheer nervousness. We were surprised at this, as we knew that he was a man of affairs, and one who had been in the habit of speaking in public, at least in small political gatherings. No doubt the brother was sincere in his statement, but he did not know that he was talking in his sleep at the time. Since then he has aroused out of sleep and now his voice is steady and his words are fitly spoken in the assembly of the saints. We have no doubt the same would be true of hundreds of Christian men if they were fully awake.—Words and Weapons.

Sabbath School Work.

LESSON HELPS.

(Selected from *Teubal*.)

SECOND QUARTER.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

LESSON I, April 4th, John 1, 1-18; mem verses 1-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Word was flesh, and dwelt among us."—John 1, 14.

JOHN THE APOSTLE.—(1) Born at Bethsaida Galilee. (2) His parents were Zebedee and Salome. (3) He was born probably between 1 and 5, the youngest of the apostles. (4) He lived. His mother was probably the sister of Virgin Mary (compare Matt. xxvii, 56, with xix, 25); hence he was first cousin of Jesus, a more distant cousin of John the Baptist. He a brother James. (5) He was brought up to his father's business of fishing in the sea of Galilee. (6) It is probable that he never married. (7) He was a disciple of John, and one of the earliest most intimate disciples of Jesus. (8) John probably remained in Palestine till after the destruction of Jerusalem; then he went to Ephesus, was fished to the island of Patmos by Nero, returned to Ephesus, A.D. 96-7, and died there about 98, aged 90 to 95. (9) Writings.—The Gospel, A.D. 80 or 90. Three epistles, and the book of Revelation, A.D. 90-96.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.—1. Author—John. Language—Greek. 2. Date of writing—A.D. 90. 3. Place of writing—probably Ephesus. Sources—it was probably the record of his preaching about Jesus.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. *The Word*: divine Jesus, who became man (v. 14). He called the *Word* because He reveals to us thoughts and feelings of God, as our words reveal our thoughts. *With God*: distinct from God, yet God Himself. 2. *The life was the light of men* by giving spiritual life, He enables us to see spiritual things. Dead things cannot see. As a light person, He teaches, He gives us an example. *Darkness*: of sin and ignorance. *Comprehension* did not receive it and thereby become light. *His own*: especially the Jews. 12. *Sons*: child of God. 13. *Not of blood*: not by natural descent. We are not God's children because our parents are. *of the will of the flesh*: not by our natural will. We cannot make ourselves the children of God. *Nor by the will of man*: nor can others make us so. 14. *Made flesh*: became man. *Flesh* incl. our whole human nature, body and soul. *Grace*: God's favour freely given, and hence the blessing and joyous gifts of that love, especially spiritual gifts. 16. *Grace for grace*: Grace added to grace the mean of further grace; a grace in us responding to each grace in Him. 18. *Saw God*: His full brightness, His perfect character plane. They had seen only hints revealed them. *He hath declared Him*: Jesus shows what God is, so that now we have seen more of God.

SUBJECT: CUR DIVINE SAVIOUR. I. WHO HE WAS (vs. 1-3).—Who was the Word? Why is He so called? What proofs do you find in these verses of the divinity of Christ? What else do you learn about Him? What advantages to us in having a divine Saviour? If Jesus Christ made the world, can there be conflict between true science and the Bible? I does the fact that He made the world make study of nature more interesting and more helpful?

II. WHAT HE DOES FOR MAN (vs. 4, 9, 14).—What two things Christ does for us are mentioned in v. 4? What kind of life is given by Him (Eph. ii, 1; 1 John v, 11-13)? What is meant by light? Where does the light abide? What meant by darkness? What light did Christ bring to us? For whom is it meant? Who bore witness to this light?

Are there many things we need to know we could not find out by ourselves? What some of them? How has the gospel been proved to be the light for every man? Is this a proof that it is true?

III. SOME REJECT HIM (vs. 10, 11).—Why meant by the world? Under what obligation were they to receive Christ? How did they reject Him? Who are meant by "His own"? Under what special obligations were they to Him? (v. 1-4; Deut. xxiii, 1-16.) Is rejecting Christ mean as well as wicked?

IV. WHAT HE DOES FOR THOSE WHO REJECT HIM (vs. 12-18).—What did He do for those who rejected Him? What are some of the privileges of being children of God? (Rom. viii, 14.) How can we become children of God? Who meant by "the Word was made flesh"? (Q) Was He full? What is grace? What have received from Him? How does Jesus reveal to us? What reasons do you find in this lesson loving and trusting Jesus.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. God's great love to us in sending a divine Saviour.

II. How great must be the evil and danger sin to require such a Saviour!

III. Since the same Jesus made the world; brought the gospel, they must be in harmony.

IV. Our four great needs—life, light, grace, truth.

V. Sin is not only wicked, but mean.

VI. The great privileges of the children of God—they are heirs of His love, His care, His character, His home.

VII. We become His children by faith in Jesus and regeneration by the Spirit of God.

—What do you think would be the result if every member of the Church increased his subscription to the Missions Scheme by ten cents?