

THE LOCKED DOOR.

THERE is a story that Dr. Arnot was accustomed to tell of a poor woman who was in great distress because she could not pay her landlord his rent. The doctor put some money in his pocket, and went round to her house intending to help her. When he got there he knocked at the door. He thought he heard some movement inside; but no one came to open the door. He knocked louder and louder still; but yet no one came. Finally he kicked at the door, causing some of the neighbours to look out and see what was going on. But he could get no entrance; and at last he went away, thinking his ears must have deceived him, and that there really no one there. A day or two afterwards he met the woman in the street, and told her what had happened. She held up her hands and exclaimed, "Was that you? I was in the house all the while, but I thought it was the landlord, and I had the door locked!"

Many people are keeping the door of their heart locked against the Saviour in just the same way. They say, "I am afraid I shall have to give up so much." That is something like a ragged beggar being unwilling to give up his rags, in order to get a new suit of good clothes.—D. L. Moody.

THE QUEEN'S MERCY.

QUEEN VICTORIA was not twenty when she ascended the throne of England. Coming into possession of power with a heart fresh, tender and pure, and with all her instincts inclined to mercy, she found many things that tried her resolution to the utmost. On a beautiful morning the young queen was waited upon at Windsor by the Duke of Wellington, who had brought from London various papers requiring her signature. One was a sentence of court-martial against a soldier of the line that he be shot dead. The queen looked upon the paper, and then looked upon the wondrous beauties that nature had spread to her view. "What has this man done?" she asked. The duke looked at the paper, and replied, "Ah, my royal mistress, that man, I fear, is incorrigible. He has deserted three times." "And can you not say anything in his behalf, my lord?" Wellington shook his head. "Oh, think again, I pray you!" Seeing that her majesty was so deeply moved, and feeling sure she would not have the man shot in any event, he finally confessed that the man was brave and gallant, and really a good soldier. "But," he added, "think of the influence." "Influence!" the queen cried, her eyes flashing and her bosom heaving with strong emotion. "Let it be ours to wield influence. I will try mercy in this man's case; and I charge you, your grace, to let me know the result. A good soldier, you said. Oh, I thank you for that! You may tell him that your good word saved him." Then she took the paper, and wrote, with a bold, firm hand, across the dark page the bright, saving word "Pardoned!" The duke was fond of telling the story, and he was willing also to confess that the giving of that paper to the pardoned soldier gave him far more joy than he could have experienced from the taking of a city.—Anon.

"I ONLY WANT YOU."

NEARLY four years ago, I was going to spend the day in a large city. Before starting, I said to my dear invalid sister, who is now in glory, satisfied with the fulness of her Father's house, "Can I buy anything for you, dear? I do want so much to bring you something from town." She interrupted my question, saying, with such a sweet, yearning look, "Nothing, dear. Don't bring anything. I only want you. Come home as soon as you can." Her tender words rang in my ears all day—"I only want you"; and oh, how often, since her bright entrance within the pearly gates, have her touching words and loving look returned to memory!

Well, dear reader, is not this, too, what a dear Saviour says to you? Do you not want, sometimes, to offer prayers, tears, almsgiving, deeds of kindness, sacrifices, earnest service, and patient endurance? But He, too, turns from all, and says, "I only want you." "My son, My daughter, give Me thine heart." No amount of service can satisfy the love which craves only the heart. "Lovest thou Me?" was His thrice repeated question to His erring disciples. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father" (John xiv. 21). Devotion of life, earnestness of service, fervent prayers, are only acceptable to Him as fruits of love. They are valueless without the heart. He says to each of us, as my sainted sister said to me, "I only want you."—Presbyterian Messenger.

DUTY.

SPEAK the word God bids thee!  
No other word can reach  
The chords that wait in silence  
The coming of thy speech.

Do the work God bids thee!  
One—only one still loom  
Awaits thy touch and tending  
In all this lower room.

Sing the song God bids thee!  
The heart of earth's great throng  
Needs for its perfect solace  
The music of thy song.

—Rev. Alfred J. Hough in N. Y. Independent.

GO HOME, BOYS.

BOYS, don't hang around the corners of the streets. If you have anything to do, do it promptly, right off, then go home. Home is the place for boys. And the street corners, and at the stables, they learn to talk slang, and they learn to swear, to smoke tobacco, and to do many other things which they ought not to do.

Do your business, and then go home. If your business is play, play and make a business of it. I like to see boys play good, earnest, healthy games. If I were the town, I would give the boys a good, spacious play-ground. It should have plenty of soft green grass and trees and fountains, and a broad space to run and jump and play suitable games. I would make it as pleasant, as lovely as could be, and I would give it to the boys to play in, and when the play was ended, I would tell them to go home.—National Presbyterian.

A NUMBER of young American ladies resident in a town near Hartford have formed themselves into a society which they call "The Tongue Guard." Each member pledges herself to pay a penny into its treasury box every time she says anything against another person. She provides a home box for the pennies, and at the end of three months sends the contents to headquarters, where the money is utilized for charitable purposes. If every one would follow the example of the Tongue Guard a great many poor children could be comfortably clothed for the winter.—Christian Leader.

Our Story.

BARBARA STREET.

A FAMILY STORY OF TO-DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR NELL," "A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

THE first four verses were these:—

Silent dimly-lighted chamber  
Where the sick man lies!  
Death and life are keenly fighting  
For the doubtful prize.  
While strange visions pass before  
His unslumbering eyes.

Few of free will cross thy threshold,  
No one longs to linger there:  
Gloomy are thy walls and portal,  
Dreadfulness is in the air.  
Pain is holding there high revel,  
Walted on by fear and care.

Yet, thou dimly-lighted chamber,  
From thy depths, I ween,  
Things on earth and things in heaven  
Better far are seen  
Than in brightest broadest daylight  
They have often been.

Thou art like a mine deep-sunken  
Far beneath the earth and sky,  
From the shaft of which upgorges  
Weary workers can descry,  
E'en when the sea on earth sees nothing,  
Great stars shining bright on high.

Hester looked up. Comprehension, sympathy, must have been in her gaze, for her face was for the moment radiant with beautiful expression. Did Philip read it aright? Something of it he must have read, for he smiled in answer—a smile which caused Hester's feeling so to brim over, that she turned back to the book, and so hid her face from view. Very soon Miss Denston's voice broke upon her dreaming, but not before she had those verses by heart. Is it to be wondered at that Hester did not sleep that night for long after she went to bed? Her heart was full of delicious tumultuous emotion, as a young dreaming heart will be on what wiser people would deem absurdly inadequate occasion. The past and the future offered her visions to dwell upon. For the second time had Mr. Denston taken her into his confidence, shown her himself as she felt sure no one else knew it. The others knew that Mr. Denston had been dangerously ill and had recovered. But that was the mere external fact, the mere husk, hiding the real significance of what had happened. She alone had been allowed to see beneath it, to see that Mr. Denston had gone through an experience deeper than the physical one, and that in that sick-chamber, where death and life had been fighting, he had undergone a spiritual change. To Hester that change was obvious. Upright and unselfish she now knew he had always been, but there was a new look in his face, a new tone in his voice, a gentleness in his manner towards his sister, a something indefinable, yet to be felt, which told of some deeper source of conduct than of old.

And mingled with such thoughts came others associated with more personal feeling. And for ever repeating themselves in her brain were the words, "She who appeareth to mortals as a fancy-weaving maiden, bearing under an abstracted demeanour a kind and gracious heart." There was not much in the words, perhaps; but coming from Denston, as Hester believed they did, there was, for her, food for reflection in every one. Would the night ever pass, and issue in that morrow which was to bring so many happy hours? So longing, she fell asleep. Poor Hester! At the very moment when she was about to taste, the cup of happiness was snatched away. She received a small note to this effect:—

"Will my dearest Hester come and sit with me while the others go their little excursion? I should not ask it were I not assured from her own lips that it is Hester's greatest happiness to stay by the side of her poor friend. I am very unwell this morning. G. D."

Hester's heart became bitter within her; her very lips turned pale. But she set them firmly, and, not trusting herself to speak to any one, she went straight to her room, resolving to send a message back to the others by Mr. Denston.

Mr. Denston was not in the drawing-room when she entered. Miss Denston, in the pink dressing-gown, pale, with her black hair streaming, and her eyes unusually bright, met her almost on the threshold.

"My dearest Hester!" she exclaimed, embracing her tenderly. "I knew you would come." Hester suffered, but did not return the caress.

"Yes," she said, "of course I should come." Miss Denston kissed her again, led her to the sofa, and sat down, still holding Hester's hand, and gazing at her in an eager way.

"We will have a happy day together, will we not?" she asked, not relaxing her scrutiny. Hester, inwardly quivering under the restraint she was putting upon herself, said—

"I am sorry you are not well. I shall be glad to do anything you want." "I would not ask you to stay, dearest, had you not often assured me that you were happier with me than anywhere else."

Miss Denston spoke in a quietly assured tone, retaining a firm pressure on Hester's hand. But her glance was too eager to be in keeping with such perfect confidence. To Hester came a heart-chilling sense that Miss Denston distrusted her at this moment, but meant to hold her fast. But she did not guess the origin of this morning's mood, nor that the little incident which had had such an exciting effect on her had had equally exciting effect on her friend, and had occasioned her also many sleepless hours. For Miss Denston had, unknown to the others, been awakened from her light sleep by her brother's tread, and had witnessed the little scene. Miss Denston's love for Hester was her one dominating emotion, and was of a kind that could brook no rival. To share Hester's affection would be to lose her, and to lose her would be the blasting of her (Miss Denston's) life, the reducing it to the black dreariness of what it was before Hester's affection and devotion had come to brighten it. Such looks, and smiles, and silent interchange of ideas betokened a hitherto unsuspected intimacy, and suggested, what had never occurred to her before, the idea of a possible attachment between Hester and Philip. It was a suggestion bearing with it unlimited alarm and distress. But even while trying to reject it as

groundless, there came the recollection of a certain change in Hester observed of late, a change which, while consisting in an access of reserve towards herself, was shown also in improved spirits, and a greater ease and animation of manner in Hester. She came to the conclusion that under the circumstances the first step to be taken was to keep Hester away from the morrow's expedition, and to do it in such a way as to also serve as a test of the girl's feeling.

And now poor Hester was being tested, and, with all her self-restraint, could not will the colour into her pale cheeks, nor prevent a certain controlled dejection from showing itself in her bearing. While the two were sitting thus, Mr. Denston entered the room in his great-coat, evidently come to bid good-bye to his sister. Hester's pale face flushed, and that was not unnoticed by Miss Denston. Hester had taken off her hat when she came in. Philip Denston understood the situation at a glance, or at least its outward meaning. But before he could speak, his sister said, with a smile, and a pressure of Hester's hand—

"Dear Hester has come to stay with me, Philip. Is she not good and kind?"

"No, Miss Hester," said Denston, coming forward and proceeding to take of his coat in a business-like manner, "that certainly cannot be allowed. If my sister needs a companion, it must be I. So pray go across at once. They are ready, I see, and waiting for us."

Hester did not speak. She clasped her hands nervously. Miss Denston spoke for her.

"My dear Philip, apparently you do not know that Hester wishes to stay. She finds her pleasure in being with me, and you will prefer to go with your friends."

"Is that so, Miss Norris? Would you really rather stay?"

Hester ventured to look up. Philip was looking at her steadfastly. Was he trying to give her courage? Did he wish her to break her bonds? But still she said nothing. There was only a piteous look in her eyes as she turned them upon him. Denston threw himself into a chair.

"If you stay, I stay," he said.

Miss Denston, in the poignant disappointment caused by Hester's silence, forgot her own tactics, which involved the resolute assumption of the girl's preference for being with her, and made a false move, which she repented immediately afterwards.

"If you wish to go, Hester, I will not detain you."

The words, cold as they were, yet gave Hester an opening for an effort for which she had been strangely nerved by the thrill of delight which ran through her at Mr. Denston's last action. At the moment it seemed to her possible to give every other consideration to the winds if she could but gain this one pleasure.

"I should not like to keep Mr. Denston at home," she said. "If you can do without me, I should like to go."

She looked, as she spoke, at Mr. Denston for encouragement, and she got it in a reassuring smile. He rose.

"Come, then," he said, "we must lose no time. They are wondering what has become of us, I have no doubt."

She rose too. Now the thing was done, she was as much as the heart with a sense of selfishness, all that was bad; but she hardened herself. She took up her hat.

"Good-bye!" she said, and kissed Miss Denston's impassive cheek. Regrets, apologies would have seemed contradictory and hypocritical. She made none.

When the door closed on the two, Miss Denston sat for a time quite motionless. Then she pressed her hand to her heart, and slow tears fell unnoticed down her cheeks. She heard the wheels rolling off down the street, and knew that the party had staid. With a low cry of pain she lay down on the sofa and buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE WOODS.

Hester, meanwhile, before she had had time, in the tumult of her confused emotions, to realize fully her position, found herself in the midst of gay reproachful voices, the fresh morning breeze blowing round her, a blue sky flecked with summer clouds overhead, and a pair of impatient horses waiting to convey her swiftly from all associations of bondage. It was a great boon to her that she had no occasion herself to explain, or even to speak. She scarcely heard what was said, but she knew that Philip Denston was taking upon himself all that was necessary. She soon found herself seated in the wagonette by the side of her mother. Grace and Mr. Denston sat opposite, while Kitty had been rendered unexpectably happy by being lifted by Mr. Waterhouse into the front to sit by his side. On the door-steps stood Sarah to see the start, with the wind blowing her hair and the inch or two of net that did duty for a cap, the neighbouring servants had appeared in the area; while their mistresses peeped round curtains at the upper windows.

"Oh," said Grace, "I am afraid the neighbours will think us very proud. Mr. Waterhouse should have ordered the carriage to wait three doors off."

The man let his horses go, touched his cap; they were off. For some time Hester hardly noticed her surroundings, and heard what was passing only as it were in a dream. She was, however, vividly conscious that Philip Denston was present, and that though he did not speak to her, he looked at her now and then as if anxiously, and once or twice, when she caught his eye, he gravely smiled. He talked little, and addressed himself almost exclusively to Mrs. Norris, who sat immediately facing him. The gaiety of the company was nearly all contributed by the front seat. Waterhouse had shown better tact than to ask Grace to occupy the seat by his side, and, indeed, with that pleasant shyness natural to a lover, was, perhaps, better pleased to have Grace sitting just behind Kitty, appealed to frequently by that young lady, but for the most part sitting rather silent, within earshot of whatever he might say, and with a gentle expression about her mouth, and a clear, happy light shining in her dark eyes. For Grace could not resist the influences of the hour. To be borne swiftly through the bright, spring air, to see the familiar streets left one by one behind, and the distant hills coming nearer and nearer, thrilled every nerve with pleasure. Waterhouse, stealing sly glances now and then, could see that Grace was happy, and, in spite of the sting from which he still suffered, felt his spirits rising, for had he not arranged the whole affair to give Grace pleasure, and to see her look pleased? His face entirely

cleared, and seemed ever ready to break into genial smiles; he talked to Kitty, and teased her, and so stirred up his horses with a shake of the reins, and a flick of the whip, that Mrs. Norris made nervous exclamations. But, by-and-bye, when they got out between the hedgerows, amid fields yellow with buttercups, and Kitty cried out eagerly, "Why, that is a lark!" straining her eyes to discern the speck overhead which poured down such a stream of music, Waterhouse felt some misgiving. Grace had grown more and more silent. She had not spoken a word for the last ten minutes, and what could that mean? Waterhouse glanced round anxiously, and turned back again with a curious constriction at his heart. For he distinctly discerned tears in Grace's eyes, and her hands were clasped tightly. Man-like, he did not understand that a woman's pleasure is sometimes akin to pain, and continued much perturbed in spirit, and dared not look round again until some gay remark came to his ear by-and-by in Grace's own bright voice, and he was finally quite reassured when she begged him to stop the horses while Mr. Denston got out for a branch of hawthorn.

Soon after twelve o'clock they entered a small country town perched on a hill, which overlooked a wide laughing prospect of meadow and wooded slope.

The hill ascended, they dashed in fire style (much to Kitty's satisfaction) through the principal street, and pulled up at an old-fashioned inn.

Every one knows the sensation on alighting after a long drive through the air—that mixture of high spirits, with a brain slightly confused, and limbs just sufficiently stiffened to make stretching agreeable, which was so novel and delightful an experience to our heroines.

"We will have some lunch," said Waterhouse to Mrs. Norris, "and then be off to the woods for the afternoon. What time shall I order dinner? It must be early, for we ought to be at home before it gets chilly, on Denston's account."

They went into the inn discussing the matter, and the rest followed.

As Kitty came fast with Denston, she whispered to him, eagerly—

"I have never been inside an inn before."

Kitty was not usually communicative towards Mr. Denston, being a little afraid of his grave face and speech, but at that moment a confidence was a necessity.

Denston smiled, and said—

"Oh, indeed?"

Grace, who had overheard, looked up full of merriment. Kitty's elder sisters were no less ignorant of such experiences than Kitty herself, and in spite of her weight of additional years, Grace felt almost as buoyantly full of curiosity and enjoyment as her little sister. She looked up at Mr. Denston, intending to tell him so, but when he caught her eyes he withdrew his own immediately, and waited for her to move on. Grace was a little hurt, for this was not the first time Mr. Denston had given her this sort of rebuff, and it seemed to confirm the idea which had sometimes crossed her mind, that he disliked her.

Not long afterwards our friends set out for the woods, which lay not far from the end of the High Street of the town. The perfect weather—the quaint little houses of the town, everything that came in sight, gave occasion for gay talk. Now they crossed a green, dotted with fine old elms, and now, turning into a side road, they came in sight of an old ivy-covered church, half hidden in trees, which occasioned many exclamations of delight. The path lay through the churchyard, where they lingered to look about them, and then sat down in the porch that Mrs. Norris might rest. Clustered round the church were charming old-fashioned houses. Grace said, with a half sigh—

"If one lived in the country, how happy and good one would be!"

Denston answered her rather abruptly.

"That is shallow philosophy, Miss Norris, but perhaps you only propounded it as a piece of sentiment."

Grace was surprised at the address, for Denston rarely spoke to her, and Waterhouse glanced at Denston and Hatened.

"It certainly was my sentiment at the moment, Mr. Denston," said Grace, smilingly, "and I am rather inclined to uphold its philosophy."

"Oh," said Waterhouse, with some contempt, "Denston's philosophy is that man is unhappy and bad everywhere. 'Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,' is his reflection in places like this."

"I beg your pardon," said Denston, "my philosophy is nothing of the kind. But I cannot suppose that happiness and goodness spring up in the country like buttercups. Would you prescribe country air as a cure for selfishness, for instance, Miss Norris, or for a man suffering from remorse?"

"I don't see why it should be useless in either case," answered Grace; "surely a man would be nearer God and heaven here than he would be in an ugly smoky street."

"That is not practically true, Miss Norris. The sentimental fashion of the day preaches beauty as a gospel, but a man needs a stronger lever than that to lift him from vice to virtue. A man may be a saint in a London slum and a villain in a green lane, and might be removed from one set of surroundings to the other without having his moral character in any degree affected by it."

"Come, Denston," broke in Waterhouse, "spare us your philippic; we are none of us aesthetes here. It seems to me you are killing a butterfly with a spear. We all agree with you if you mean that you and I, being blundering selfish fellows, would remain so if we lived in green fields instead of Barbara Street, and that Miss Norris, being good and happy, would equally remain so under the like exchange—don't we, Miss Norris?"

"No," said Grace, colouring a little; "indeed I don't like my ideas reduced to such an absurdity. I am very often cross and ungrateful in Barbara Street, but I don't think I could be so in the midst of all this loveliness. I should want to thank God every moment that I was alive."

"And I suppose," said Denston, smiling, "that you could do that better in an ivy-covered church like this, within hearing of the rooks, than you could in a smoke-begrimed city edifice?"

"Certainly," said Grace, stoutly.

"I should have been less surprised to hear that sentiment from your lips than from your sister's," said Denston, turning to Hester.

"Oh," said Grace; "Hester, though a mere baby compared with me, is often much wiser." And she turned an affectionate look on her sister.

"I enjoy this," said Hester, blushing, but speaking steadily; "but I do not think we should be happier here if we were just ourselves, and brought all our faults and our difficulties with us."

(To be continued.)