

"THE CURFEW."

By W. T. SAWARD, B.A.



O SWEET sad hour of rest,
Thou canst not come too soon;
Light lingers in the west
To guide the rising moon.

Sweet curfew hour of peace,
We wait thy solemn bell,
All toils and passions cease,
And, at thy magic spell,

The folding landscape round
Sinks into slumber still;
Only the ivy-crowned
Church speaks from the hill.

Voice from the ages past,
Not for the city's roar,
Some deep seclusion vast
Or unfrequented shore

Still welcomes what thou bringest,
The sweet, calm peace of old;
The vesper that thou singest
Is more than all their gold.

IN THE TWILIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

By RUTH LAMB.

PART III

INVISIBLE WALL BUILDERS (*concluded*).

"Support the weak, be patient toward all"
(1 Thess. v. 14.)

"Forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Coll. iii. 13.)

DURING our last evening talk, my dear girls, we named one or two of the stones which help towards invisible wall-building. This evening our list will be a longer one, for, as in the case of more substantial structures, the materials are many, varied and always at hand. Here are a few of them.

Readiness to take offence at trifles or even at nothing. Imaginary grievances. Speech. Silence. Pride. Obstinacy.

There are persons so over-sensitive, or it may be so miserably self-conscious, that every word or act of their neighbour is supposed to be directed at themselves, and is at once mentally appropriated by them. There are no more active and persistent builders of invisible walls of partition, than are the people with whom self is always to the front.

Mind, dear girls, I do not mean selfish people in the ordinary sense of the word, those who want the best of everything, no matter at what cost to others. On the contrary, the people I allude to habitually appropriate the worst of everything and are, for this very reason, most uncomfortable people to be associated with. Their characters abound with contradictions, for they are often truly kind, generous and self-devoting, though they make themselves miserable and keep their friends in constant fear of giving them offence by some innocent word or action.

I have no doubt you, my dear girls, can remember schoolfellows or companions of this

difficult type. So lovable in many ways, but so touchy and hard to get on with, that you were never quite happy in their company, because you never knew which of your sayings or doings might be misconstrued. I am afraid that those who are always on the watch for grievances and who take offence so easily, find a pleasure in nursing their imaginary pigmies, until they become very real giants to themselves. Turn the light of common sense on these fancied grievances—creatures of a morbid imagination—and they will quickly disappear.

Better still; look at them by the light of the love which "thinketh no evil," and though they may have sprung into being for an instant, they will cease to exist as quickly. It is the nursing and cherishing which gives them all their importance.

Is there one amongst you, my dear ones, who is at this moment pondering over some seeming slight, or mentally repeating a little jest, harmless enough, though in your case it has proved to be "not convenient"—a mere careless word that was uttered without the intent to pain any one, least of all a friend? If so, I beseech you to look at the other side and try to recall to mind the many kind acts and words which have come to you from the same source, but of which you have taken little account.

Has she, whom you now look upon almost as an enemy, been heretofore your friend? If so, is it likely she would inflict pain needlessly and wilfully? Do not believe it for a moment. Set yourself resolutely to banish that one incident from your mind. Let your thoughts dwell on all that has been sweet and pleasant in the past, and you will not only keep your friend but be fortified against future misunderstandings. Nurse your special grievance a little longer and silence will add another stone to help in building an invisible wall between

you. How often it happens that, whilst a few misunderstood words have laid the foundations of a wall of separation, a few frank ones, spoken at the right moment, have levelled them again, and the old friendship has been established on a firmer basis than before.

Nurse a grievance in silence and the wall steadily rises. Pride adds stone to stone by suggesting that it would be humiliating to speak first when you were not the person in fault. Defer the frank question which would probably have brought an honest expression of regret from the friend whose word or act has pained you, and still higher goes up the wall. It would have been easy to speak at first and the words—"Believe me, dear, I never meant to pain you; forgive me for having done it, though, but for your telling me, I should never have known," would have sounded very sweet in your ears.

Most likely you would have learned a good lesson from the little misunderstanding. You would have taken yourself to task and owned that you had been too ready to take offence when none was intended, and future misunderstandings would have been avoided.

Sometimes, however, too long a time is allowed to elapse and another difficulty arises. We have not only felt aggrieved, but we have shown it by cold looks, short answers, or by keeping out of the offender's way. She, innocent of all intention to pain us, naturally feels aggrieved in turn and retaliates, thinking the while that no real friend could be so fickle, and that she has been mistaken in giving the name to one who was unworthy to bear it.

Thus the two, who were really so much to each other, drift apart. A thoughtless word or act began the separating wall; silence added to it, pride proved a rapid builder in raising it higher and higher, and obstinacy put on the