

BARLEY WOOD;

OR,

BUILDING ON THE ROCK.

BY

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PREFACE.

BARLEY WOOD aims rather to present and defend the essential points of our faith, in contrast with those of the sects, than to attack, with sectarian bitterness, creeds dissenting from ~~our~~ own. I may have drawn unfavorable comparisons—true ones, all will admit—but it was solely from a desire to strengthen the love of the children of the Church for her system, usages, and privileges.

I have endeavored to defend the Church in the words of her well-known writers, as far as it was practicable, often placing their sentiments in the mouths of my characters, chiefly that of Mr. Bellamy, the Rector of Litchfield who, in the eleventh chapter, is made to quote extensively from a multitude of authors.

The class of readers borne particularly in mind in writing this book, embraces those pre-

paring for Confirmation, it having been the devout desire of the author to assist in acquainting them with the foundation of the Church in which they profess to believe, and in contending for "the faith once delivered to the Saints."

J. M. P.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE REVIVAL.....	7
CHAPTER II.	
MOLLIE RAYMOND'S "CONVERSION".....	29
CHAPTER III.	
SIGNS OF DISSENT.....	50
CHAPTER IV.	
THE ACE OF DIAMONDS.....	65
CHAPTER V.	
POOR ASSISTANCE	75
CHAPTER VI.	
"WHAT IS TRUTH?"	87
CHAPTER VII.	
AT THE RECTORY.....	110
CHAPTER VIII.	
LOOKING FOR THE FOUNDATION STONES.....	123
CHAPTER IX.	
MISSIONARY ZEAL.....	136

CHAPTER X.		PAGE
A PERPLEXING LETTER		153
CHAPTER XI.		
"THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS"		181
CHAPTER XII.		
WILLING TO WAIT		215
CHAPTER XIII.		
THE TEST OF FAITH		235
CHAPTER XIV.		
FRUITS OF THE REVIVAL		253
CHAPTER XV.		
FAREWELL TO BARLEY WOOD		269
CHAPTER XVI.		
AGNES' DECISION		281
CHAPTER XVII.		
AFTER THE FUNERAL		306

BARLEY WOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVIVAL.

It was late in the winter of 185—, that the little village of Litchfield, slumbering so quietly in the Genesee valley, was aroused from its tranquillity by the breaking out of a powerful religious revival. There was soon a great change in the general aspect and atmosphere of the place, particularly in the daily routine and the countenances of its inhabitants. There were prayer-meetings, convert-meetings, exhortation-meetings innumerable; and the principal stores were often closed, even upon the busiest days of the week, if the cracked bell of the old Presbyterian meeting-house pealed forth its summons from its high station on the windy hill. Sectarian prejudice was laid aside; Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians forgot all differences for awhile, and united with hearty zeal and brotherly love in "the great work"—"the great effort"—of saving souls; and they were thus

enabled to publish, as the result of their undivided exertions, that God had blessed their labors abundantly. Great numbers were daily added to the church. Backsliders were returning, and sinners crying, "Lord, what shall we do to be saved?"

There was a popular female seminary at Litchfield, a Presbyterian institution, which had, during the winter we speak of, a patronage of nearly two hundred boarders, mostly daughters of farmers from the surrounding towns. The effects of the revival were speedily manifest at Barley Wood. The regular course of study was interrupted by religious exercises, and fully two-thirds of the pupils were "under conviction," "upon probation," or zealously engaged in the daily prayer-meetings. The few that kept aloof were regarded as scoffers, hardened in heart, and denounced with the same compassion that was freely expended upon the Rector and little flock of St. Paul's, because they took no part nor lot in the matter.

It was a keen, frosty morning in February, and the early bell which broke the dreams of near two hundred sleepy girls was reluctantly obeyed, for the cold rooms, uncarpeted floors, and frozen water were powerful persuasives to a little more sleep, a little more folding of hands; but the last clang had hardly ceased when there was a subdued bustling through the

building, shivering talk, chattering laugh, and the running of half-clad girls to the hall registers to finish their toilets. There was playful rapping at doors where the bell had not been heard or heeded, occasionally an intrusion, and a hasty exodus compelled. Was it not early, very early, the yawning, dissatisfied girls asked of each other, when they saw how faint was the gray light that struggled through the frosty panes. They had despaired of studying, and many of performing their devotional duties in their rooms, when Miss Lacy, the music teacher, entered the hall, and informed them that on account of the extreme coldness of the morning, they could retire to the library, which was comfortably heated, and have a season of prayer. A majority of the girls instantly and solemnly followed her, a few retired to the seclusion of their chambers, while a dozen or more remained in the hall, pouting or tittering over their books and slates.

"We must turn pious or freeze, I suppose," broke out little Fanny Cass, quite pettishly, as she crowded into the circle surrounding the register. "I think it would be quite as charitable to invite us down to the library to study as to invite them there to sing psalms."

"I came to school, not to prayer-meeting, when I came here;" said Kitty Williams from over her dog-eared algebra, "but it is little

schooling we have had for the last month or more."

"Who cares?" laughed out Mollie Raymond, the leader of the black-list every term, and the instigator of all the fun and mischief waged against the Faculty of Barley Wood. "For my part, I am satisfied to have it so. Timmons goes to prayer-meeting, so the Latin don't recite; Dame Hopkins goes to prayer-meeting, and the algebra is omitted; Lacy goes to prayer-meeting, and rids us of our music lessons. I shan't complain. I have laid in a good stock of novels, expecting no interruptions whatever."

"Did you know, Mollie, that they prayed for you last night in Miss Hopkins' room; for that precious, gifted young girl who is wasting her time and talents in the service of Satan?"

Mollie gave a loud, merry laugh, which made the old seminary ring, and in so doing broke a strict rule, no unusual thing for her. The girls looked serious for a moment, and bent over their books in expectation of Mrs. Timmons', the principal's, advent or summons; but, being happily disappointed, they lost their studious faces, and Mollie began again.

"I wish I had been in there to say Amen. I did not have as pressing an invitation last night as usual. Timmons called me into her room yesterday, and asked me, with an impressiveness truly appalling, why I was not a Christian? I

told her it was because I hadn't turned Presbyterian yet. My mother was bred a Quaker, and I inclined most to that persuasion. And then there *was* a tableau—this the attitude and expression"—and she distorted her pretty face, and twisted her lithe little figure after a fashion that made them forget the rule and laugh out merrily again. Then a new idea made Mollie's mischievous eyes to twinkle brighter than before.

"Now I will tell you, girls, what we must do. It will be rare sport, and if we act our parts well Timmons will be puzzled. We must turn shouting Methodists up here, and have the power. I know just how it is done. I have been to their camp-meetings ever so many times;" and she drew a graphic description of the most stirring ones she had attended.

"But we shall make such a noise," said timid Kitty Williams.

"Of course we shall; we must if we have the power, and when they rush in here to see what is the matter you must be too overcome and absorbed to be conscious of their presence. We have as much right to choose the style of our meetings as Timmons has of hers. You all know 'Hebrew children,' don't you? Well, then, begin—loud and strong, now mind you"—and her clear, liquid voice broke out in the old camp-meeting melody:

"Where now are the Hebrew children—
Where now are the Hebrew children—
Where now are the Hebrew children?
Safe in the promised land.

"They went up from a fiery furnace,
They went up from a fiery furnace,
They went up from a fiery furnace,
Safe to the promised land."

There were always enough to follow Mollie Raymond in any thing her mischief-scheming brain could invent, no matter how venturesome it might be, and on this occasion, although she was rather feebly joined in the first stanza, a swell of voices poured out roundly in the second. The doors around them were opened, and wondering faces looked out, but no one joined the group or concert who was mindful of the fable of poor Tray.

Before the company in the library were startled by the singing in the hall above them, Mrs. Timmons had concluded a long and impressive prayer, in which a special and earnest petition had been offered for "that gifted girl, whom Providence had placed under their care—that daughter of a faithful watchman of Zion, whose heart was cold to the outpouring of the Spirit among them;" and when they arose from their knees, she looked sadly over the crowded seats before her, and asked if Agnes Ryland, the young lady for whom the burden of her prayer had been made, was present.

Miss Lacy replied that she was not; that Miss Ryland appeared not only indifferent, but opposed to the movement among them. She had refused several times to attend their prayer-meetings, had objected to having them held in her room, and she had been heard to say, she thought such excitements productive of more evil than good.

Miss Hopkins was amazed at Miss Ryland's frame of mind, and her possession of sentiments so widely at variance with those preached by her learned and eloquent father. She feared their pupil had been poisoned by infidelity; she had seen a French copy of Voltaire on her table, and heard her speak in high praise of many writers of known infidelity.

"Did you inform Miss Ryland of our assembling here this morning?" asked Mrs. Timmons of Miss Lacy.

"No; I did not. I considered it useless."

"You will please to do so now, with my request that she join us."

Miss Lacy was withdrawing when the song of the "Hebrew Children" broke out clearly overhead. Its effect upon the whole assemblage was to hush them in wondering silence for a moment until Mollie Raymond's voice was clearly recognized. There was no longer any doubt regarding the object of the singing, and Miss Lacy was charged to command the immediate

attendance of each of the young ladies concerned in the uproar before Mrs. Timmons in the library.

Mollie's voice did not falter in the least when Miss Lacy entered the hall, although there was trembling and failing in the notes of her companions. Her eyes were closed, her face wore a most solemn expression, and swaying backwards and forwards as she sang, she pitched her voice higher and triller as Miss Lacy approached, never ceasing until firmly shaken by the shoulder, although her name had been called several times with severe reproof. Then Mollie opened her eyes, and looked vacantly around; her companions tittered or trembled, or stole slyly to their rooms, from which they were recalled, however, and directed to the library, Mollie humming the "Hebrew Children," as they went.

Miss Lacy proceeded to Agnes Ryland's room, which was the most attractive one in the seminary, for her father's wealthy and generous hand had admitted in its furnishing every demand of her comfort and refined taste. There was no lavish and unnecessary display; Agnes Ryland must have some intrinsic worth, if possible, in all her surroundings. There was a handsomely-carved bookcase, containing a small but standard library; a fine piano, her father's portrait, and several beautiful engravings upon the walls, a pleasing carpet, tempting easy-chair and couch,

and a large centre-table, furnishing periodical reading to the school at large. She had been a student at Barley Wood several years, had graduated with the highest honors, but had prolonged her stay, at her father's urgent request, to perfect herself in music and painting.

There was not a pupil in the school more respected and beloved than Agnes Ryland. Her sweet serenity of manner, elevated mind, and quiet, unobtrusive dignity won her a position not easily attained. There was something about her which drew all hearts towards her, yet checked the advance of the forward and the intrusion of the rude. She was up before the bell rang that morning, and made her simple toilet as quietly as possible, fearing lest she should awaken the pale-faced girl who had shared her pillow through the night.

"Poor child! I hope they will not awaken her," she had thought when she heard the bustling in the hall. "She suffered so much last night, she must have a long sleep this morning, if possible." Then she went to the window and dropped the shade, for the early sunbeams were creeping towards the sleeper's pillow.

Carrie Seabury was the first room-mate Agnes had had during her long stay at Barley Wood. She would never before consent to share her apartment with any one, and the change arose wholly from her own choice. Yet Carrie Sea-

bury, poor suffering child that she was, would not have been chosen as a room-mate by any other student in the school. She was a penniless orphan, placed there by her uncle and guardian as the best means of freeing his gay and fashionable family from what they deemed an unpleasant incumbrance. Frail and sickly from her childhood, she was backward in her studies, far behind the other pupils of her age, and although she then applied herself to her books with the utmost perseverance and diligence, taxing herself beyond her strength, her recitations were seldom perfect, and she was constantly mortified by failure. Her health was better that winter than it had ever been before, and she had been glad of the change proposed by her uncle, though apprehensive of the trials and annoyances she would be called upon to endure, and the timid, ignorant, old-fashioned dressed little thing, was for a long time entirely unnoticed and neglected by the crowd of healthy, happy girls, until Agnes Ryland took her under her protection, which brought about a material change.

The first time that Agnes saw her she was impressed by her sweet expressive face, its look of sadness and suffering. She gave her a kindly word, and marked the light of joyous thankfulness that leaped into her soft eyes at the unexpected attention, revealing her sense of neglect

and loneliness. Agnes then took pains to seek her out, and learned of Mrs. Timmons that her uncle had left her there for two years at least, and as her poor health required she should room with some one who must at times nurse and wait upon her, she had been given into Miss Lacy's care, sharing her room in the upper hall. Agnes' interest increased in the poor girl, and daily she exerted herself to bestow upon her some kindness or attention. She would work out her hard problems unasked, find the unheard-of places on her map, give her some pretty story to read out of study hours, or, what was prized as highly by the lonely child, a kind smile and pleasant word when they passed each other in the halls.

Agnes had missed her from the breakfast-table the day before, and was disappointed to see her place at dinner unfilled. Miss Lacy had been at the Young Converts' meeting all the morning, and was absent from dinner, keeping a fast. No one could give the cause of Miss Seabury's absence—no one seemed at all interested in the matter. Agnes hastened to Miss Lacy's room and rapped softly on the door. She received no answer, but a low moaning within impelled her instantly to enter. She found Carrie lying upon the bed, white with pain, and almost insensible with suffering. Agnes bent over her pillow, pressed her hand upon her

hot forehead, and anxiously whispered her name.

Carrie suddenly opened her eyes and stared wildly and vacantly about the room, as if she had heard some one call her in her troubled dream.

"My poor child," said Agnes tenderly, "you are very sick, I fear. What is the matter with you? Has any one been with you to-day?"

"No;" was the quivering reply, her eyes overflowing as she spoke. "I am so glad you have come up to see me—you were very good to come. I have always had these headaches; they are very bad, sometimes."

"Have you had any medicine or food to-day? To think of your lying here alone—it is unpardonable."

"I don't want any thing, Miss Ryland, only for you to stay with me a little while," and impulsively she threw her arms around Agnes' neck. "I knew that you would come if you heard I was sick—who told you? No one has been in here since early this morning."

"No one told me," said Agnes, kissing her, "I missed you from the table, and so came up to see what was the matter. I knew Miss Lacy was absent, and therefore doubted your being sick."

Agnes felt her pulse, and was alarmed at her high fever. She bathed her head in cold water,

darkened the window, through which the sun streamed directly upon the sick girl's pillow, and then hastened to her own room for medicines her experience recommended. Having administered them, she went to the kitchen and prepared something for Carrie to eat, sending up one of the servants to build a fire, for the room was extremely cold.

She sat by Carrie's bedside the rest of the afternoon, uninterrupted by the entrance of any one, until Miss Lacy made her appearance, at five o'clock; and Agnes was thus forced to believe that if she had not been led to seek the poor girl's chamber she would have been entirely neglected until that late hour. Miss Lacy was startled at finding the room warm and occupied.

"What! is Miss Seabury sick?" she asked, in a tone of surprise. "She complained a little this morning of a headache, but I thought the pure, fresh air would restore her. Did you take any out-door exercise, as I recommended, my dear?"

"I tried to get up, but could not," was the faint reply. "I am much better now; Miss Ryland has been very good to me."

"You should not have troubled Miss Ryland, my dear," said Miss Lacy, with a smile of ineffable sweetness. "You should have called upon me. It is my duty, you know, as well as my pleasure, to attend to your wants."

"She did not send for me," said Agnes, coldly, "I came here of my own accord, and found her alone and in great suffering."

"My duties to-day have been multifarious," continued Miss Lacy, evidently discomposed by Agnes' remark. "I have endeavored to perform them all to the best of my ability. I may have failed in some; I doubtless have. Carrie, my dear, shall I get you a cup of tea?"

"No, I thank you, Miss Lacy; Miss Ryland brought me some but a little while ago."

"I am glad you are feeling better," said Miss Lacy, "for I have invited the young ladies in here this evening for a season of prayer, and chiefly on your account, my dear Carrie." Meeting with no response, she appeared uneasy and dissatisfied, and after a few moments' silence, blandly inquired if Carrie thought she would be well enough to have them come in for that purpose.

Agnes was plainly annoyed by the proposal, but kept silent.

"You must be guided by your own wishes in the matter," was Carrie's meek reply. "I hope to be much better by that time."

Agnes Ryland never acted from impulse alone, she wisely weighed her purposes before carrying them out, and her foresight and judgment seldom deceived her. Therefore, when she turned to Carrie, a short time after their

conversation with Miss Lacy, and asked her, in a low whisper, how she would like to share her apartment, saying she would be truly grateful to have her for a room-mate, it was no half-formed, unreliable determination on her part to befriend and care for the homeless, orphaned child.

"Oh, Miss Ryland!" burst out Carrie, scarcely able to speak from overwhelming emotions, "why are you so good to me—you above everybody else? What has made you so kind? What can I say to thank you—how can I ever repay you?"

When Agnes made her request of Mrs. Timmons, as she did that night, for Miss Seabury's removal to her own room, the good principal was greatly surprised and perplexed thereby. Agnes made no complaint whatever, her object would be attained as completely without, and she was averse to a quarrel with any one, particularly Miss Lacy, who, for some unaccountable reason, was a favorite of Mrs. Timmons. Carrie was assisted to Agnes Ryland's room, where she was tended through the long, suffering hours with a tenderness she had not received since they lifted her from her dead mother's bosom.

Agnes, having completed her toilet, sat down to read, as was her invariable custom, a portion of the Bible. Her face glowed over the

inspired page, and the interest with which she searched out the references, and turned to her concordance betrayed no formal fulfilment of an allotted task. She was rising from her knees, checking her impulse to break out in the pretty morning hymn she had sung from her childhood, when Mollie Raymond's singing broke discordantly upon her ear, awaking Carrie at the same time.

"I am sorry they have disturbed you," said Agnes, hastening to the bedside. "How are you this morning?"

"Oh, I am much better, almost well," was the cheerful reply, and she raised herself from her pillow, but to fall back upon it again, moaning with pain.

Agnes did all she could to alleviate her suffering, forbidding her to attempt getting up again that day, and advising her to go to sleep once more, if it were possible. Carrie obediently closed her eyelids, and Agnes sat down by the bedside with a favorite volume, in which she was deeply engaged when interrupted by Miss Lacy.

"I will go down directly," replied Agnes, after listening to her message, and she reluctantly closed the book; looking anxiously towards Carrie, who was peeping out from under her sleepy eyelids.

"I am sorry to leave you here alone, Carrie.

Is there any thing I can do for you, before I go?"

"No; I am going to sleep now, and shall wake up quite well, I am sure."

"Which must not be in an hour, at the very least," said Agnes, as she placed a glass of water within the sick girl's reach, and hastened to the library. She arrived in time to hear the conclusion of the sharp, laconic reproof which Mrs. Timmons administered to Mollie Raymond and her followers.

"I am deeply pained," began Mrs. Timmons, when Agnes was seated beside her, and none but the teachers were present, "that you, Miss Ryland, of all the young ladies in my school, should place yourself in the ranks that war against the Lord."

"Will you explain your accusation?" asked Agnes, most respectfully. "I should be sorry could you prove it just."

"Are you blind to the movement going on in our midst,—the work of the Holy Spirit among us,—unconscious that He is powerfully present at this time, to bless with His sanctifying influence the penitent soul?"

"There is unquestionably a great excitement," replied Agnes, "but I cannot and do not believe that the Holy Spirit is more present at one time than another with His sanctifying influence. That to me would seem contrary to Scripture;

for when the Comforter descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, was it not to convince the Church and the world of the fulfilment of our Saviour's promise, and that from henceforth he would 'abide with them forever,' as able and willing to bless at one time as another?"

"But you cannot deny," interposed Miss Hopkins, "that the influence of the blessed Spirit may be imparted in greater measure as we improve the gift, and therefore be more sensibly present at one time than another?"

"Certainly not; but I do oppose the doctrine that he comes and goes as a being of arbitrary power and caprice: as, for instance, that for some years past, He has not been with His people as He is with them now, and that it will be many years before He will come again with the same power, and that our system of action must depend upon these periodical and capricious visits. To my mind there is something awfully profane in such a system of teaching."

The faculty looked aghast. "Then you are entirely opposed to revivals of religion," said Miss Lacy. "What think you of the great awakening on the day of Pentecost?"

"I believe it to have been the fulfilment of our Lord's promise of sending the Comforter, and that the miraculous gifts then conferred by God on the Apostles were in order that they might

proclaim and establish the Christian faith. But we cannot call this present movement a Pentecost; I can see no proper comparison between the two. A Pentecost takes place but once in the world's history; it is the trophy of a Crucifixion, a Resurrection, and an Ascension. A modern revival needs no such mysteries to bring it forth,—it can be obtained whenever men are willing to pray for it. I am opposed to the revival system, for it has given us many evils which cannot be measured—it teaches disciples of Christ a religion of frames and feelings, and it teaches sinners to live on year by year in sin, waiting for the flood-tide of religious feeling."

"How can you hold such sentiments, my dear Miss Ryland," said Miss Hopkins, with a deep-drawn sigh, "when you see the blessed effects of this movement all around you,—hardened sinners and more hardened backsliders led by its power to turn unto the Lord for salvation! Only look in our own circle, and mark the number of giddy, sinful girls who have been awakened to a sense of their condition."

"The effects of this revival are not yet ripe," replied Agnes with sad seriousness: "that it may be productive of much good, I sincerely pray; yet I am apprehensive of the evil which has ever followed in the wake of such excitements. They are generally succeeded by a spiritual torpor, irreligion, and infidelity. The most

hardened cases we meet are often those who once *got* religion in a revival. The Methodists have the most revivals, the most converts, and the most backsliders. It is my opinion, that true religion, exercised in communion with God, lies too deep to be promoted by such means, and in the change of heart and life, not in the raptures of a violent emotion, we find the 'fruits of the Spirit.'"

"You have imbibed strange sentiments, my dear Agnes," said Mrs. Timmons, with much feeling, "those which I fear will yet drive you far out on the sea of unbelief. Are you not guilty of denying the Holy Ghost in refusing to acknowledge Him as the chief promoter of this blessed awakening in which He has given so many signs of his presence?"

"What signs?"

"You would not ask that question if you had not kept yourself aloof from the work of the Lord," said Miss Hopkins, most solemnly. "Had you been with us last night, and seen many of those who came with hearts steeled against all holy influences, melt under the fervent prayers of the righteous and press to the anxious seat, you might with them have been led to acknowledge the presence of God in our midst."

"I must differ still further from you," said Agnes, conscious of the dangerous ground she was treading upon yet retaining her mild com-

posure. "I have often attended these meetings, and think I understand their power. It was explained by one of our most eminent Presbyterian divines, the Rev. Dr. Mason, venerated by us all. He says: 'When we consider the mechanism of the human affections, and how rapidly human emotion is propagated by *sympathy* through promiscuous crowds, we can explain all the phenomena which in this matter have lately attracted public wonder, without recourse to supernatural agency; and must be convinced that nothing can be more precarious than the tenure by which these *sudden converts* hold their possession.'"

The ringing of the breakfast-bell interrupted their conversation, and Mrs. Timmons immediately dismissed Agnes, who was glad to hasten to her sick charge. She was returning from the basement with Carrie's breakfast when met by Mrs. Timmons, who, after making the most interested inquiries after the sick girl, and promising to visit her in the course of the day, invited Agnes to accompany her to the prayer-meeting that morning. As it was Saturday, and there were no recitations, she had but one plausible excuse for a refusal—Carrie's illness, and the necessity of remaining with her, which Mrs. Timmons overruled, by proposing that another one of the young ladies should fill her place. Agnes instantly fixed upon Ellen Butler as the

only one of whom she would desire the favor, confident of her readiness to grant it; and so consented to the request of Mrs. Timmons, who immediately retired to her closet, and offered up a fervent petition that the Lord would be powerfully present at His house that morning, making sinners to tremble and call upon His name for salvation, and thus manifest his presence to her whom Satan was blinding with unbelief.

CHAPTER II.

MOLLIE RAYMOND'S "CONVERSION."

CARRIE did not like the idea of Ellen Butler's companionship that morning, although she carefully concealed her aversion to the plan from Agnes. She would rather lie there entirely alone, she thought, than to have the tall, silent girl, who had never spoken to her, or seemed conscious of her existence, sitting stiffly beside her, with her inseparable crocheting in her fingers. She grew feverish from dread of her entrance and Agnes' departure. She had been chilled through many times by simply passing her;—to spend a whole morning alone with her, would be terrible in the extreme.

Ellen Butler was not a favorite at Barley Wood; she commanded an icy respect from all, even Mollie Raymond, who never ventured to trifle with her dignity. Carrie wondered at Agnes' affectionate regard for her, and so did the rest of the school.

"I am sorry to leave you," said Agnes, putting on her bonnet and cloak; "but my desire to stay with you would have been a selfish excuse to offer to Mrs. Timmons, when Ellen But-

ler is so ready and willing to take my place. I only go to please Mrs. Timmons; otherwise it is very much against my inclination."

"I should think it would be," said Carrie. "I never attended a meeting of the kind, and do not wish to. Are many of the girls going this morning?"

"Yes; quite a number, I believe. Mollie Raymond and her clique have been given, in punishment for their disturbance in the hall this morning, the choice between attending the prayer-meeting for a week, and deprivation of 'recreation hour' for a month to come. Kitty Williams tells me they have chosen the prayer-meetings, and that they are all to dress themselves as ludicrously as possible, and go forward to the anxious seat."

"Will they dare do such a thing?" asked Carrie.

"Without doubt, if Mollie Raymond's spirit is in the matter. But here comes Ellen; I know her slow, heavy step;" and with smiles of welcome she threw open the door for her friend, who gave but a slight nod to Carrie upon their introduction, and then seated herself close by the bedside, drawing forth her crochet-work, in which her attention was immediately engrossed.

"I am sure you will pass a pleasant morning," said Agnes, pausing on the threshold.

I am quite envious of your prospective happiness."

"Do not fail to furnish us, upon your return, with this morning's addition to the catalogue of the 'newly elect,' the 'eternally predestinated,'" remarked Ellen, with a sarcastic smile.

Agnes made no reply, and hastened to join Mrs. Timmons and her company in the library.

Mollie Raymond and her companions were not yet ready; but as they promised to be at the meeting-house as soon as possible, the party set off without them, Mrs. Timmons requesting Agnes to walk with her. They had but a short distance to go, and she felt it to be her duty to improve the time and opportunity by serious conversation.

"Did you ever experience a change of heart, Miss Ryland?"

"Not in your strict acceptance of the term. I cannot remember the time when my heart was first given unto the Lord."

"Cannot remember the time? Then, believe me, my dear Agnes, you are still uncleansed by the Holy Spirit."

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," replied Agnes, in the words of Holy Writ. "I have the assurance of my acceptance with the Father. I know nothing of 'a change of heart,' neither

do I desire to, else than a 'growth in grace, and knowledge of the truth.'"

"But when were you *converted*? When was your heart cleansed from all its sin, and made a pure offering unto the Lord? If it ever has been, you can surely remember the time."

"I can remember," said Agnes, "loving God, and trying to serve him, as far back as I have any remembrance. I may truly say my Christian profession began in early childhood, and, with God's grace, I have ever since been striving to keep in the heavenly way. I have not been perfect—far from it—but I have had God's forgiveness of my sins when I called upon him for pardon, as I have at morning, noonday, and night, through the whole course of my life. Another objection I have to this revival system is, that it teaches there must be in every individual *a definite period* of conscious conversion, before which no one is capable of any religious action acceptable to God, and after which the most hardened sinner is so changed as to make his salvation almost sure. I have often heard those who have undergone this sudden change 'relate their experience,' and marked that this so-called 'witness' has ever been *feelings* of rapturous emotion. But we are told it is our spirit, not our feelings, with which the Holy Spirit bears witness of our sonship—not our animal nature, but the higher and nobler part of us.

As I said this morning, we find the fruits of the Spirit in the change of heart and life—the continual resigning of ourselves to His will, and not in the raptures of a violent emotion."

They walked on a little way in silence, both absorbed in thought, Mrs. Timmons evidently disquieted in mind. Finally, she asked Agnes why she kept aloof from God's people, and from his sacraments, if she was utterly reconciled to him? Was not that a sure sign of her defection? Was she not an alien to the covenant of grace?

The interrogation was plainly a depressing one to Agnes. "It is difficult for me to answer you," she said. "Your question turns me into the dark. I have often asked myself the same, and have but called up doubts and dissatisfaction for a response. I was baptized in my infancy, for which I am truly thankful; but I have never been to the communion, and often despair of ever doing so."

"Why should you, if your heart is right? What but an unsanctified heart can prevent our approach to that holy table?"

"It is not that which prevents me, for I have full faith in Christ's pardon for the penitent. Unworthy as I am, I would hasten to his table to-morrow, if it were not fenced round with obstacles I cannot, and do not feel it my duty to overcome."

"Fenced round with obstacles?" ejaculated Mrs. Timmons. "There are none but those the Lord has appointed."

"I doubt your correctness there," replied Agnes, "for I find nothing in Scripture to commend my going before the sessions to relate my experience. On the eve of communion I would have my mind quiet and self-possessed, and would bare my heart only to the merciful eye of my forgiving Father. Why should I be catechised by a bench of elders, and receive from them admission to the holy supper? Besides this, I am dissatisfied with the manner in which our people partake of that sacrament, so awful to me in its holiness and solemnity. I could not partake of it thus irreverently. Is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

"Are you turning Papist?" abruptly asked Mrs. Timmons.

"I am repeating Scripture," replied Agnes, smiling; then continued after a pause, during which Mrs. Timmons sighed heavily, "If we ever get upon our knees, I think it most befitting that we should when partaking of the body and blood of Christ, in remembrance of his passion and death upon the cross for us; and that, instead of sitting aloof from the table, we should draw, like the disciples, closely around our Lord, and receive the sacred emblems from the pas-

tor's hands, rather than from those we saw yesterday in the counting-room, the market-place, or clutching at dishonest gains."

"You lay a sinful stress upon externals," said Mrs. Timmons. "It is the net with which Satan would decoy you."

They had reached the meeting-house, and, while passing through the entry, Mrs. Timmons said to Agnes, in an earnest undertone:

"Open your heart for the entrance of the Holy Spirit this morning, and pray God to reveal to you the foundation of your faith, lest you discover too late that it was built upon the sand."

Elder Clarkson, the pastor of the Methodist church, had made the opening prayer, which was quite long, and considered by most of the assembly powerful and impressive, and Deacon Ludlow had begun singing, in his broken, nasal voice, a hymn in which the congregation was attempting to join, when the entrance of Mollie Raymond and her party drew the majority of eyes from their hymn-books. Agnes could not repress a smile at the ludicrous display, serious as her meditations had been, and much as she disapproved of the bold indecorum. Mrs. Timmons was white with displeasure. Every one in the house was moved to frowns or laughter.

Mollie, apparently unconscious of the attention she was attracting, headed the gay proces-

sion, each member of which wore a grave and composed countenance, and was dressed in a style corresponding with hers. She wore a fantastic hat—found among the servants' cast-off finery—which she had lavishly trimmed with flowers, knots, and ribbons of every shade and description. Her hair was dressed in enormous puffs, copied with exactness from a quaint old portrait of some of Mrs. Timmons' ancestors, that hung in the Barley Wood parlor, the wonder of visitors and the ridicule of the girls. She was wrapped in a full, old-fashioned gray cloak, summoned from the dusty chest of a grandmother's garret, a few weeks before, to do service at a *tableaux* party! She was scarcely to be recognized in the odd figure she made, nor were her companions a whit behind her in point of effect. They seated themselves demurely in the Barley Wood pew, returning Mrs. Timmons' indignant gaze with perfect indifference, and, having found the hymn, joined loudly in the singing. The harmony of their sweet, cultivated voices soared clearly above the discord of the congregation. Agnes bowed her head that she might not be distracted by their unseemly appearance, and, yielding to the influence of the moment, was borne into a realm of holy, elevated thought. The pathos of Mollie's voice increased as she sang;—could mockery make such a show of earnestness?

Agnes had been deeply impressed by Mrs. Timmons' admonition upon their entering the church. Was the foundation of her faith built upon the sand? Did she lay a sinful stress upon externals, suffering them to bar her from the blessings bequeathed to the disciples of Christ? Was her dissatisfaction founded upon any thing stronger than prejudice—caprice, perhaps—or boastful imaginings, which Satan employed to lure her to himself? With these silent questionings, this probing of her inmost soul, the mists of uncertainty and doubt gathered densely around her, and she felt herself drifting out into the darkness, unguided and alone. Whither was she tending? Had she, blind to her danger, cut away from the good old ship, to brave the waves in a fragile bark she thought to guide whithersoever she would? Had she not believed herself to be on safe, smooth waters—the billows asleep and the heavens cloudless and fair, God's hand protecting her, and angels in the stern? Was she deluded by Satan after all? Must she turn back speedily to where the mast-head of the old ship towered up in the mist?

"Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief," was the bitter cry of her soul. She sat during prayers and exhortations, which did not break her abstraction. She opened wide her heart for every holy influence God might send, every revelation touching the foundation of her faith,

and with humble submission and trust yielded herself to His guidance.

The singing of the congregation aroused her, and she resolved to be attentive to the remainder of the exercises, to divest herself of all prejudice and weigh with a careful, candid mind all that she heard and beheld. The interest of the meeting had rapidly increased, many were weeping, and the majority wore anxious or enraptured faces. Mrs. Lyon, an enthusiastic Methodist sister, who sat on one of the front seats and had walked two miles to be present at the meeting that morning, had started with her loud shrill voice the hymn they were then singing; many, like her, swaying backwards and forwards with closed eyes as they sang; nearly every one in the house joined in the familiar words:

"Come ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore." &c.

The effect was visible and powerful. Agnes felt swayed by the tide of sympathy rolling in heavy waves upon them, casting many upon their knees and leading others to ejaculate loud praises to God. She trembled for those whom she saw urged precipitantly forward, believing themselves moved by the power of the Holy Ghost. There was something in Mollie Raymond's voice which struck her forcibly. She looked towards her, and was startled by her paleness and the

serious, half-terrified expression of her face. Was she feigning,—artfully preparing to go forward to the anxious seat? Agnes doubted and trembled. Mollie stopped singing before the last verse was concluded, and with streaming eyes bowed her head. As soon as the hymn was ended, Mrs. Timmons knelt and tearfully besought God for those of her pupils who had come to His house that morning as scoffers, but whose hearts were already breaking down before His powerful presence. Amens, groans, and ejaculatory praises went up from all parts of the room in sympathy with her petition. She was followed by the Baptist clergyman, who took up the burden of her entreaty and wrestled long and boldly with the Lord.

When his prayer was finished, all arose from their knees but Mollie Raymond and Kitty Williams, whose sobbings were distinctly heard. Mrs. Lyon burst out with a stirring camp-meeting hymn, while the several clergymen left their seats and passed among the congregation to converse and strive with the yielding and hard in heart. Elder Clarkson proceeded directly to the Barley Wood pew, and seating himself beside Mollie, began a low and earnest entreaty which Agnes could but imperfectly overhear. He besought her to quench not the Spirit striving then so powerfully with her; perhaps for the last time, nor to bid His departure for a more convenient

season, but to listen to the voice of warning and make that the day of her salvation. He glowingly depicted the unpardonable sin of rejecting the Holy Ghost, the horrors of a sinner's death, and the eternal tortures of the damned. Mollie's increased and violent weeping made him the more urgent and eloquent in his appeal. He labored with her until the invitation to the anxious seat was given, when she arose and went tremblingly forward, followed by Kitty Williams. The rest of her companions dropped their heads to conceal their merriment, and when Elder Clarkson addressed them, treated him with a disrespect which led him to withdraw.

Agnes seriously pondered the matter. If the influence which led Mollie Raymond—who came thither with no holy intention whatever—to kneel at the anxious seat was that of the Holy Spirit, why was it that she whose heart was in full submission to God, waiting obediently for the slightest whisper of his will, was insensible to a like duty, and far from rejoicing at Mollie's sudden change? She could not yet renounce her views so openly expressed that morning, and beheld, in her volatile school-mate, a sad illustration of Dr. Mason's theory, accounting for her "conviction" "without recourse to supernatural agency."

It was noon long before the meeting was dis-

missed, which was pronounced one of the "most blessed seasons" they had enjoyed. A prayer-meeting was appointed at Barley Wood that evening. The clergymen and many others gathered around Mollie and Kitty: warmly clasped their hands, promised them their prayers, and warned them of the danger of turning back. Agnes was studiously observing them, when she heard her name spoken in an undertone, by Mrs. Timmons, to Dr. Ranney, the Presbyterian minister, and an intimate friend of her father. She caught the serious gaze he had fixed upon her, and to avoid an interview would have hastened from the church, had he not manifested a desire to speak with her.

"I am glad to see you here, Miss Ryland," he said, taking her proffered hand and retaining it, while he looked earnestly into her face. "You have absented yourself entirely from us of late. Are you growing cold to the cause of the Lord?"

"No, I do not think I am."

"Be careful, lest you deceive yourself or are deceived. What I have heard makes me tremble for you;" and he glanced inadvertently towards Mrs. Timmons, who was anxiously observing them. "I shall call upon you soon, when I hope you will converse with me freely, and relieve me of the concern I now feel for you."

Agnes replied by inviting him to call at his

earliest opportunity. The friendship between him and her father led her to respect him highly, although she considered his religious views constrained and narrow, and found little or no pleasure in his conversations on those subjects. Mrs. Timmons then advanced and invited him to take tea at Barley Wood the next day, that he might have, not only the opportunity of conversing with Miss Ryland, but with others among her pupils, whose feet had just turned Zionward. He considered a moment, then tendered his acceptance, and Mrs. Timmons and her little company slowly withdrew.

Agnes lingered behind the rest; she wished no companion but her thoughts, which she could not impart to any one. Mrs. Timmons walked between Mollie Raymond and Kitty Williams, her plain, modest apparel oddly contrasting with what they wore. They hung their heads most humbly, blushing at the observation they attracted, while Fanny Cass and the rest of the party made them the subjects of their ridicule and mirth, as they followed on the opposite side of the street.

Agnes was not glad to have Ellen Butler awaiting her return, and a full rehearsal of that morning's events. She was not in a mood to bear her dry sarcasms and skeptical scoffing. The subject was an important one to her, awakening serious thoughts too sacred for tri-

fling. The anticipation of Ellen's raillery was chilling in the extreme; she could have talked freely with Carrie—she desired to, but Ellen's presence would be a finger of ice on her lips. She loved her with all her polar qualities; like many favorite authors, she was congenial for a single mood.

She paused upon reaching the door, and heard Ellen relating an amusing story in her dry, funny way, at which Carrie was laughing merrily. She stole in so softly, they were not aware of her presence until she was leaning over Ellen's chair.

"Did you think to discover a conspiracy by creeping upon us so slyly?" asked Carrie. "To think I should not have heard your footsteps, when I have been listening for them an hour or more."

"Oh, Ellen made you forget me altogether. Has she cured your headache, or is she guilty of having increased it?"

"I have hardly thought of my head since you went away. The pain is almost gone; you must let me get up to dinner. Miss Butler has told me so many amusing things, you must make her repeat them to you."

"Agnes knows my story budget by heart," said Ellen, without lifting her eyes from her work. "We expect now to be entertained by her account of the prayer-meeting, which must

have been prolonged beyond the spirituality of some of the brethren, I judge, as it is far past dinner-time. Come, Aggie, and let your descriptions be accurate, lest you do injustice to some of those roof-raising exhortations and prayers. Are you under conviction?"

"Yes," replied Agnes, sadly, as she sank into the easy-chair beside Ellen,—a dissatisfaction flitted across her face, a betrayal of her soul's perplexity and doubt; "I have been deeply convicted this morning, but not of the presence of the Holy Spirit among us, bringing sinners to a sudden sense of their condition, but that the Church is blinded by an erroneous system that saps its very foundation-walls. The exercises of this morning, and their results, have pained me exceedingly. I do not wish to be an alien from the fold of Christ, yet I find it impossible to make my home where the elements are so uncongenial to my feelings."

"And do you believe that your Church is the true fold of Christ?" asked Carrie, meekly.

"You have asked me a question I am little prepared to answer, yet it is one I have often asked of myself. I sometimes doubt that it is, more than any other, yet fear my doubts are founded only upon prejudice, weak sophism, or, as Mrs. Timmons said this morning, 'a sinful stress' I lay upon externals."

"If you are Presbyterian enough to hold the

fundamental doctrine of election, why trouble yourself with fears of any kind?" asked Ellen. "You have nothing to do in the matter; your eternal salvation or damnation is already settled, and has been from the beginning of time. This present 'effort' must be a struggle to alter the fixed decrees of God—an attempt to bring within the fold those that are doomed to remain without, or to save those already elected to be saved. Christianity is truly a mixed-up puzzle."

"But that is not Christianity you are talking about," said Carrie, with kindling enthusiasm. "Neither Christ nor the Apostles taught such a doctrine, I am sure." Then mindful of her daring to venture upon an argument with two so much better learned than herself, she added, a modest blush crimsoning her face—"I believe that Christ came to this world to save sinners; and what would have been the use of His coming, if we were saved or condemned already?"

"Ah, that is the very blow," said Ellen, drily, "that has knocked out the underpinning of the Presbyterian Church in Germany and Denmark, even in Geneva, the very home of Calvin, where, a few years since, when the venerable Malan dared to say, in his discourse, that Jesus 'is the true God and eternal life,' and that 'there are three that bear record in heaven,' he was driven from the pulpit, and hooted on the streets by

the enraged mob. Look at New England, the old home of Puritanism, but now the nursery of Universalism, Unitarianism, and of every ism but the one imported in the 'Mayflower.' It is nothing uncommon to hear Boston divines deny the divinity of Christ, and even old Harvard is trying, I see, to convince her sons that, although they be right in denying the 'three that bear record in heaven,' yet there is sufficient reason to believe that there is One. It is little to me, aside from the study it affords me, what sect falls or prevails; but if I was to take up sides in the matter, I should defend that of the writer who said, that 'as Presbyterianism is not conservative of things spiritual, it could never have been intended to be the Lord's almoner of grace to men, or the steward of His mysteries in the household of faith.'"

"But Christ promised His Apostles," said Carrie, with an animation interesting her hearers, "that He would be with them always, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against His Church."

"Well, I should think that the gates of hell had fairly prevailed against the Presbyterian Church," said Ellen, sarcastically, "when the majority of that denomination in New England, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Prussia, and wherever the hand of Luther and Calvin scattered wide their seed, have de-

nied the Lord, who, their Bible teaches, bought them with His blood. I have been reading on this subject lately, following Presbyterianism from the Reformation to its present condition; and it is stated, upon no weak authority, that more than thirty millions of that sect have disowned the Trinity, and denied the divinity of Jesus."

Agnes was silent; she, too, had been reading upon the subject, and found cause to lament the downward tendency of the Church of her forefathers, yet had never before viewed it in the startling light Carrie's remark suggested. If the gates of hell *had* prevailed against it, where was the ark of safety, the true bulwark of Zion, to be found? Was it all a fable, a marvellous deception, as Ellen called it?

"Where is the Church that the gates of hell have not prevailed against?" she asked of Carrie—"the Church that purely holds the faith once delivered to the saints?"

"It is of course the Church to which she belongs," thrust in Ellen.

The remark intimidated Carrie, but did not prevent her reply.

"I believe it to be the Holy Catholic or Episcopal Church."

"Oh, fie! I thought you to be a Romanist!" said Ellen with an abrupt laugh. Even Agnes did not conceal a smile at what she deemed the

simple answer of an untaught child. A long silence followed, in which Ellen looked so provokingly wise and infinitely amused, Carrie nearly frightened herself into the belief that she had made a grievous mistake somewhere. Agnes looked kindly upon her, but Carrie saw a compassion in her soft eyes which made her most uncomfortable. She wished she was learned like them, and could talk as fluently, that she might defend her position. Their silence was more oppressive by far than open opposition would have been.

Agnes consented to Carrie's wish to get up, and began to assist her in dressing for dinner. The bell rang, but Ellen lingered to go down with them. Agnes hoped she would forget to ask any thing more about the prayer-meeting, but she did not.

"But you have not told us any thing after all about the meeting this morning. Did Mollie Raymond go forward for prayers as she said she should?"

"Mollie went forward to the anxious seat, and so did Kitty Williams," replied Agnes, with a seriousness which led them fully to understand her meaning.

"Do you think they were really sincere?" asked Carrie.

"As sincere as they could be under such powerful excitement. I do not wonder at the

result in Mollie's case, she is of such an excitable, impulsive temperament."

"And Kitty Williams, would, of course, do whatever Mollie did," said Ellen. "We shall now have two interesting subjects for study. I shall have to attend the meetings occasionally to observe these new converts. I prophesy the change will not last long with either of them. It is a great victory for Mrs. Timmons, a splendid triumph, and she will not have such another until Tom and myself are under 'conviction.'" She spoke of the errand-boy, a wild mischievous youth, who was a zealous Romanist.

"I fear sad results in Mollie's case," said Agnes, as they left the room. "She has not been entirely destitute of faith, before now,—but this may uproot every germ."

"Not if she is predestinated to be saved," said Ellen, pointedly. "You drop that important article from your faith most wonderfully."

"It is not a part of my faith," replied Agnes, distinctly, and then slowly repeated this blessed assurance of Holy Writ:

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

CHAPTER III.

SIGNS OF DISSENT.

THE news of Mollie Raymond's sudden conversion threw Barley Wood into a state of great excitement for the rest of the day. Nothing else was talked about, and the comments were various and interesting. Agnes was little disturbed by visitors, as nearly every one was attracted to Mollie's room. She was truly grateful for being forgotten; the absorbing topic was one she did not wish to dwell upon.

That was a pleasant group gathered around her fireside; they had been talking thus together an hour or more. Ellen's hands lay idle on her lap; her pale, square face growing radiant as she listened to what Carrie was telling them of her experience of life. Carrie lay upon the couch which Agnes had drawn to the fire, and Agnes sat on a low seat by her side in a meditative attitude, her soft, thoughtful eyes dreamingly fixed upon the ruddy coals.

The snow was falling fast, beating against the windows, while the wind screeched dismally through the sycamores which stood around the house; but the storm was unheeded by them,

as was the twilight which crept softly in as if to hide Carrie's tears, and Agnes' and Ellen's as well,—while she told them of much her heart did always ache to remember. A light rap announced an unwelcome intrusion.

It was Miss Lacy. Ellen immediately took up her work and assumed her usual statuesque attitude. Agnes courteously requested Miss Lacy to be seated, pushing forward the easy-chair; but the invitation was politely declined. She had come in for the purpose of urging them to attend the prayer-meeting in the library that evening. There would doubtless be a large attendance from the village, notwithstanding the storm, and Mrs. Timmons greatly desired all the young ladies to be present.

"Mrs. Timmons will excuse me this evening, I am sure," said Agnes, respectfully. "I must write several letters to-night, one to father. My time is so occupied, that Saturday is the only day I have for my correspondence. It will be impossible for me to attend the meeting this evening."

"Would your father be gratified with a letter written at such a sacrifice of duty?" solemnly asked Miss Lacy.

"I have a clear perception of my duty in this case," was Agnes' calm and decided reply, which called forth a short, dry cough from Ellen, who was evidently much amused.

Thereupon Miss Lacy turned abruptly from Ellen to where Carrie was lying, and asked in a voice exceedingly tender—

“How are you to-night, Carrie, dear?”

“Oh, I am almost well,” was the cheerful reply, as she rose up from her pillow. “I have not felt better in a long time. I have had such a good, kind nurse,” and she looked affectionately towards Agnes.

“I should consider it a great privilege to have been with you through this short illness,” said Miss Lacy, pressing Carrie’s hand, “but my multifarious duties have been urgent in the extreme.” Then bending close to her pillow, she added, in a whisper, “Perhaps I could have afforded you a sweeter comfort than the mere soothing of your bodily pain. I could have lifted up prayers in your behalf.”

Carrie made no answer, but listened with downcast eyes. Miss Lacy continued—

“I am ignorant of the state of your soul. I only know that you keep yourself apart from the blessed work going on among us, and so conclude that your heart is cold and buried in sin.” Carrie looked up earnestly into her face, and would have spoken; but Miss Lacy gave her no opportunity.

“You must not suffer yourself to be influenced by the intellectual theories of those who are opposed to the Holy Spirit:” here Ellen gave her

characteristic cough again, and looked sharply towards Agnes, who had withdrawn to the window, and stood with her forehead pressed against the pane. “But you must open your heart to the whispers of Him who does not alway strive with man. Will you come down to the library this evening?”

Carrie hesitated before giving her answer. Ellen’s keen eyes were upon her, and Agnes was plainly listening to hear what she would say. It was not a sinful cowardice which made it difficult for her to reply; she shrank from mentioning a subject—the most sacred of any to her—to those having no sympathy with her regarding it.

“There is to be Communion at our church to-morrow, and I am so much better I hope to be able to attend;” then lowering her voice and her eyes, she added:

“I wish to spend this evening in preparing myself for that Holy Sacrament.”

“Ah, then, you are a professor?” said Miss Lacy, much surprised. “You should not have kept me ignorant of that fact. What better opportunity for preparing for the Lord’s Supper could you have, than the one offered in the prayer-meeting this evening? Why have you never taken part with us? Have you not been exceedingly negligent of your duty?”

Here Ellen boldly interposed. secretly tri-

unphing in the effect her words had upon Miss Lacy—

“Miss Seabury is an Episcopalian; she considers you as dissenters, and guilty of the fearful sin of schism; therefore she cannot and will not unite in your worship. Episcopalians are not easily made apostates, you know, and it will avail nothing for you to make an effort in her behalf. You will have to excuse both of these young ladies to-night, and take me as an equivalent. I should think my conversion would be a desirable victory for you.”

“It would be the answer of unceasing prayers,” was the pathetic reply. Lingered by Carrie’s couch, as if pondering in silence what she hesitated to express, she finally bent over her and whispered—

“I shall pray for you, Carrie, dear. I beg of you to pray for yourself. Entreat the Holy Spirit to warm your heart with life and light.” Then kissing her fondly, she hastily withdrew, Carrie having made her no answer. She was soon followed by Ellen, and Agnes was glad to find herself alone with her little friend.

They sat in silence for some time, each seemingly unwilling to break the other’s meditation. Agnes’ face was the happier of the two. The troubled shade which settled upon Carrie’s, with Miss Lacy’s departure, gradually faded as she lay watching the pleasant light that came and

radiated on the countenance of her companion, who was evidently dreaming of something her memory or hope loved best to dwell upon—something foreign to the perplexing doubts she had endured that day.

“What a dreadful night it is!” said Agnes, looking towards the window, and shivering at the thought of the frosty air without. “It is hard to believe that many will come from the village to the prayer-meeting to-night; but there is no measuring the bounds of their enthusiasm. Mrs. Timmons will be surprised to see Ellen Butler among them.”

“What a singular girl she is,” said Carrie. “I like her much better than I thought I could.”

“She is very eccentric and peculiar in her tastes and opinions. For a long time she was as great a stranger to me as she is to the rest of the school, and would have been until now, had not a trivial incident thrown us alone together one afternoon. She makes herself disagreeable to the ‘orthodoxy’ here, by her unconcealed infidelity. No one ventures upon an argument with her, as few are so well prepared to defend their position.”

“What does she believe?” asked Carrie.

“That question would perplex her, I am sure. She receives nothing as true, but contends with every thing as false.”

"Were her parents infidels?"

"No; but for her sake they might better have been, had they peaceably united. Her father was a Methodist, her mother a Universalist,—both zealots for their creeds, and constantly disputing with each other. To Ellen, the Bible was thus made but the root of contention, and she regards it now as we might reasonably expect she would. Her mother has been dead several years; her father has been proceeding from one ism to another, until from the effects of spiritualism he is a fit subject for the insane asylum."

"Poor girl!" said Carrie, pityingly; "I used to think her a block of stone, that had never felt glad or sorry in her life. Her cold gray eyes made me shiver."

"She has suffered a great deal—more than the most of us. Sorrow does not crush every heart, you know—it hardens many. I am glad you like her, and I trust you will be friends; but you must not talk with her, Carrie, on religious subjects. It will do her no good, and she may grieve and distract you."

A long silence intervened, broken at last by a deep-drawn sigh from Carrie, and Agnes cheerfully demanded the interpretation thereof.

"I was thinking of what Miss Lacy said to me before she went out, and the frightened look she put on when Ellen told her I was an Episcopalian. She don't think me a Christian, does she?"

"Don't grieve yourself, my dear, by imagining Miss Lacy's judgment of your condition. She is very sectarian in her views; a Presbyterian 'after the straitest sect.' She probably knows less of the Episcopal Church than I do, and I confess, Carrie, I cannot see how one of your warm, exuberant nature can conform to the formalities of that Church."

"Oh, you know nothing of our Church, or you would not speak so," replied Carrie, warmly. "We are not cold and formal; I do not see how those who worship without our service can call us so. Did you ever attend the Episcopal Church?—I don't believe you ever did."

"I have an aunt who is an Episcopalian, and when I was a little girl I used to go with her sometimes. I liked the service, I remember, on account of its variety, and chose it in preference to my father's long prayers and sermons, which always made my head doze down in the pew-corner. Much to Aunt Lottie's disappointment, father soon forbade my going to church with her; justifying his course with reasons, that, though a child, I was made to understand and recognize as just. Aunt Lottie is the only sister of my mother, and since mother's death she has been like one to me. I know enough of the Church of England to wonder at her love for it as well as yours; but this is not a pleasant subject for us to dwell upon. I quarrel with Ellen

Butler on theological points and matters of faith, but there must never be a sign of warfare between you and me upon such topics."

There was a familiar step in the hall—that of Tom, the errand-boy—making them both to look up in surprise, as no one had thought of his going to the office on that stormy night, and the sound of his heavy tramp on the stairs was a sure proclamation of letters for some one. There was a simultaneous opening of doors, exclamations of joy and disappointment, and Agnes hastened out with the rest, leaving Carrie sick with loneliness of heart, the unfailing result of Tom's daily passage through the halls, distributing letters to the happy girls who had homes to write to, and some one to send loving messages to them. She had received but one letter since her arrival at Barley Wood, and that was a brief, hasty note from her guardian, inclosing a draft Mrs. Timmons had requested him to forward for the replenishing of the orphan's scanty wardrobe. No one cheered her from being homesick, or bade her come home when she could, and make the fireside glad again.

Agnes returned with three letters. "This is from father!" she joyfully exclaimed, holding up a large brown envelope, directed in a bold, heavy hand; "and this from Aunt Lottie! how good she is to write so often! and this —,"

but she stopped short, turning crimson; and Carrie, though amused, seemed unobservant of her confusion. Agnes immediately lighted another candle, and sat down by her writing-desk in the corner to read her letters, breaking first the seal of the one which had overcome her with such joyous surprise.

Agnes was so absorbed in the perusal and reperusal of her letters that Carrie felt her presence to be no prevention to her self-examination and prayer. She drew the little table beside the couch, and placed upon it her Bible and Prayer-book, and one or two other little volumes she had learned to prize as aids to self-examination and devotion. Then she knelt and prayed, with sincerest fervor, for God to aid her in considering the holy mystery, and in examining herself for the worthy receiving thereof, that she might approach the heavenly feast in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture. Nor did she forget to offer her unfeigned thanks for her comforting hope of communing with His saints on the morrow, a privilege she had not enjoyed for several months, owing to illness or some other obstacle. Then, opening her Prayer-book, she read, with devotional seriousness, the solemn exhortations which the Church addresses to her children ere they shall presume to approach that holy table. Long she remained upon her knees in earnest prayer,

and close examination of her life and conversation by the rule of God's commandments; and when she arose, the blissful serenity of her face, its joyful confidence and peace, revealed the absolved soul within.

Forgetful of Agnes' silent presence, and the increasing storm without, she was lost in a tearful perusal of St. Luke's account "of the night in which He was betrayed," when the flickering of her candle, which had wasted low in the socket, caused her to arise for the purpose of procuring another. Her attention was naturally drawn towards Agnes. Her father's letter, and that of her Aunt, lay in their torn envelopes beside her, and she was still bending over the other, which was spread open on the table, and upon which lay a tiny locket attached to the chain she never removed from her neck. Carrie quickly withdrew her gaze, and seating herself so that her thoughtless eyes might not intrude again upon the privacy of her friend, resumed her reading; and not many minutes after, she heard the rapid moving of Agnes' pen.

Carrie was in bed and sound asleep, before those letters were sealed and directed. Let us see, before she hides them in her portfolio, to whom they are addressed. There is one for the Rev. Dr. Ryland, as we knew there would be; another for Miss Charlotte Moore, as we had

reason to expect; but this one, the thickest of them all, is more of an enigma. How beautifully she has written the address—Roscoe Field, Boston, Mass.

And now that she is asleep, dreaming softly and sweetly, if we may guess by her smiles, we must steal an extract from each of those letters, else we may never find our way into the wild depths of her heart. Thus has she written to her father, after blaming herself more severely than he would ever have done for not having sent him two letters that week, as usual:

"You say, my dear father, that you trust my whole soul is in the revival here, and that I am sparing no effort to promote it. My prayers for the spread of God's truth are as earnest and unceasing as ever, and I am sincerely striving to merit divine approbation; but my heart is not, and never can be, in a movement like this. I cannot rejoice at the multitudes of sudden conversions,—as the sudden change of feeling is called; but have been deeply pained by many of them, apprehending the saddest results. I embrace Dr. Mason's views on the subject of religious excitements, and have not hesitated to express my opinions. I am aware that my sentiments have been misinterpreted by Mrs. Timmons and others, into spiritual coldness, even infidelity. . . . I do not see clearly in matters of faith; I am groping like a child in dark

places,—but the assurance of your prayers in my behalf is a promise of peace at the last.”

In Aunt Lottie's letter she counted up the weeks before the long summer vacation, when they would tend the flower-beds together again, sew and read in the dear old east-room, take long walks over the hills, and kneel together under the rose-trees shadowing a loved grave in the churchyard. And she told her of Carrie Seabury,—her sickness and neglect,—the desolate path the poor orphan had always trod.

“She is an Episcopalian, auntie; now there is a tie between you and my little friend, I am sure. She has the most childlike faith I ever beheld in any one but you. It is still a mystery to me how your Church preserves such saintly spirituality as both Carrie and you possess. I have warned her against talking with Ellen Butler on religious topics. I would not have a stone of her foundation shaken for the world. . . . I wish my soul could have the peace of yours, dear auntie; it is tossed with dissatisfaction, bewilderment, and unrest. I wonder sometimes if you ever doubted as I do—doubted almost every thing. Is it but the heaviness of a night? Will joy come in the morning?”

Now, Roscoe Field was the young student from Yale who spent his last summer's vacation at her father's parsonage, rambling over the hills with her, gathering flowers for the herba-

rium he assisted her to make; taking long drives with her through the enchanting country, and long walks in the twilight, until the too quickly fleeting harvest-moon was passed, and Roscoe Field went back to his home, a true heart following him, and his own clinging behind.

We must steal but one extract from her long letter to him, and that perhaps will be of a nature your curiosity cares the least about.

“I have not read the books you speak of, and will accept your kind offer to forward them to me by express, as I cannot procure them here. I know little of Theodore Parker or his school—only that he has widely overstepped the old orthodox limits of the Christian faith, and is therefore denounced as infidel.

“I do not like this tearing away of old bulwarks, merely because they are old,—this leveling of philosophical batteries by ultra reformers upon the good old faith of our forefathers. I am truly conservative. I would be more than satisfied with the true faith of the early Church, and never cry out for progress. But where now is that faith? Nearly every sect professes to hold it in its purity, and all plant their feet upon the same sure word of testimony. Are not these varying forms and creeds but the variegated plumes and banners of the different regiments of a mighty army, moving together

under one great Captain? Some one has spoken of Christendom as such, and the comparison impressed me deeply—even comforted me.

"I think you are growing too transcendental, too much inclined to sneer at what you call 'mouldy orthodoxy.' I am hardly satisfied with your admiration of Parker and his teachings. So I beg of you to send me his works as speedily as possible, that I may know whether to approve or censure your unbounded praise of him.

"The clock is striking twelve. I think I may safely say there is not another ear in the house that hears it. The Lord's Day is coming in with its rest and quiet, and I hasten to close this ere the last stroke of the midnight-bell.

"Good night.

"YOUR AGNES."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACE OF DIAMONDS.

WHEN Miss Lacy and Ellen Butler entered the library they found a large assemblage, consisting of the teachers and pupils of the school, and a goodly number from the village, who had defied the keen wind and drifting snow, and were gathered in a company by themselves around the fire. There was zealous old Mrs. Lyon, who thought it little to walk two miles, even in such a storm, for the sake of raising her voice with "two or three" in the songs of Zion; and there was Deacon Ludlow, and his well-worn hymn-book; brother Wiley, who had an excellent gift for exhortation; and sister Barrow, who had melted many a stony heart by her prayers.

Ellen attracted much attention, and was soon made sensible of the fact, not only by the leveling of the majority of eyes towards her, but by hearing her name distinctly pronounced in a high, shrill whisper by Mrs. Lyon to Mrs. Barrow, and the concern manifest in their countenances when they surveyed her, testified to their knowledge of her being "one of the hard in

heart," for whom Mrs. Timmons daily requested prayers. Ellen smiled; if that cold, sarcastic expression of her mouth could be called a smile, when she became aware that not only the group around the stove were closely observing her, but teachers and scholars as well. Miss Lacy appeared conscious of having achieved a triumph. Mrs. Timmons was evidently discoursing with Miss Hopkins upon the interesting circumstance; and Mollie Raymond smiled approvingly upon beholding her, and took the pains to inform her of her joy at seeing her among them. Ellen merely bowed with provoking indifference; and after scrutinizing the assembly a moment, brought forth her knitting, and might have been mistaken for a statue the rest of the evening but for her busy fingers.

The meeting had been in progress nearly an hour, and a timid convert was "taking up her cross," when the attention of those who had tried to catch her inaudible words was distracted by an arrival, which had been wholly given up on account of the inclemency of the weather. Professor Cartzen had promised to be with them that evening, and the young ladies of Barley Wood had been informed of the important fact, else it is strongly probable the attendance would have been somewhat smaller, and many toilets less carefully made. Upon his unexpected entrance, Mrs. Timmons arose and invited him to

a seat at the rostrum, which he accepted, bowing and smiling affably upon herself and the company. Then wiping his bland face with a handkerchief, which sent its elegant perfume through the room, his small, glittering black eyes wandered swiftly and restlessly over that collection of fair girlish faces until they fell upon homely Ellen Butler, where they paused until glad to retreat before the keen, unflinching gaze which shone out steadily from beneath those square projecting eyebrows.

The young lady who was speaking when he came in had sunk down in her seat in the midst of a sentence, and none would have denied her fulfilling her duty, had not Deacon Ludlow, who led the meeting, instantly arisen when Professor Cartzen was seated, and requested the young sister, who had been unavoidably interrupted, to resume the "relation of her experience." But poor Miss Thomas could not be prevailed upon to rise up again, and so was tortured the rest of the evening by the fearful thought that she had been kept down by Satan, and had denied her Lord.

Professor Cartzen was almost a stranger to the good people of Litchfield. He came among them a fortnight before, introducing himself at one of their prayer-meetings as a laborer in the Lord's vineyard, a co-worker with them in the spread of Christ's kingdom, and the saving of

souls. He told them of his far-off home in a Western territory, where he had located himself, sacrificing the luxuries of life he might otherwise enjoy, for the sake of being an humble instrument in his Master's hands, for imparting the blessed truths of the Gospel to the untaught Indians, as well as the Germans, who swelled the great tide of emigration across the Western prairies.

To assume this arduous field, he said, he had refused an honored professorship in one of the Eastern colleges. He had expended the most of a large fortune solely in missionary labor, and he should not call for aid to forward the great work until his own resources were exhausted. He was then returning to his mission, having been East with two Indian boys, who were to be educated as missionaries to their tribe. A harassing interruption in some of his business matters had detained him unexpectedly in their little village, but his lines had fallen in pleasant places, and instead of regretting his detention—which must be as short as possible, for he heard the hungry of the wilderness calling upon him to return—he was grateful that Providence had ordered his delay in a spot so refreshing to his weary soul. He should go back to the mission-house in the deep pine-woods stronger in faith than ever before; and calling the band of untutored children around him, repeat to them the

prayers Christ's followers had raised up fervently in their behalf.

His simple and touching story quickly won for him the sympathizing hearts of that little flock, and he was welcomed to their hospitable homes as a brother in Christ; and although he never solicited a dime for his struggling mission, many were the cheerful givers who insisted upon contributing their mite, through him, unto the Lord.

It was hard to decide upon Professor Cartzen's age. The conjectures of the young ladies at Barley Wood never fell below forty, nor exceeded fifty. He was large and portly, yet graceful in his movements, which were quick and nervous, but never abrupt. Polished in manner, agreeable in conversation—a scholar, without pedantry, and withal a Christian missionary, he was welcomed to Barley Wood by Mrs. Timmons, and introduced to the young ladies for their religious as well as intellectual improvement. Ellen Butler had never seen him until that evening; and bending over her knitting, she anatomized every feature and expression of his face, and gave merciless chase to his glittering, restless black eyes.

She saw them when they fell upon Mollie Raymond, and the blush they kindled on that beautiful young face. She saw Mollie's stolen glances towards him afterwards; the quick with-

drawing and drooping of her eyes when they met with his, and her blushing consciousness of his gaze the remainder of the evening. There was not a fairer face at Barley Wood than hers, a more fairy figure or sweeter voice; and her present excitement gave a liquid brilliancy to her soft, brown eyes, a heightened color to her plump cheeks, and a seriousness to her pert, laughing mouth, which made her irresistibly attractive. It was nearly time for the meeting to close, when Deacon Ludlow solicited a word from the new converts. In the breathless silence that followed all looked towards Mollie, who sat white and still as marble, her eyes tightly closed. Mrs. Timmons whispered a few encouraging words in her ear, and the trembling girl arose, almost fainting beneath her heavy cross. The disconnection of her first husky words was concealed by sister Lyon's fervent and loud ejaculations. Mollie gained confidence and courage as she proceeded, and impressively described the condition of her soul before the saving light of grace burst upon her, and the peace and joy she already had in believing.

When Mollie had finished speaking, Deacon Ludlow began to sing—

“A poor sinner was I
Appointed to die,”

in which he was joined by the whole assembly, with powerful effect. Then Professor Cartzen

arose, to the unbounded satisfaction of all present. He had been more than repaid for his tedious walk to join them that evening; he had often seen the time when he would cheerfully have gone twice as far, and that across the wild, drifting prairie, for the sake of meeting with a little company like theirs that night. He knew how to prize the companionship of his brethren in Christ. The Mission was flourishing; every Sunday, and often upon week days, the little log-chapel was filled by Indians or Germans, who caught up eagerly the bread of salvation. It was true he was far from being alone in his worship, there in the forest, but the prayers and praises were not offered up in his dear mother tongue—he could not repeat the “Our Father” to them as he had at his mother’s knee.

Then he spoke impressively to those new converts, who were blest with every opportunity for fitting themselves for their Saviour’s service. Blessed with enlightened minds, and every means for the elevation and refinement of their intellects, they who had but lately arisen to follow their Lord, were hardly to be compared with the poor savage, when he washes off his war-paint, and casts aside his tomahawk and feathers, to acknowledge what his clouded mind but dimly comprehends,—that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and through faith in

Him, he will strive for salvation. Yet both were enlisted in the one great army—soldiers of the cross. Christian schools and teachers were needed in those far-off territories—the work required woman's heart and hand, woman's untiring patience and zeal. Were any of those before him ambitious of wider fields of usefulness than their quiet homes afforded—desirous of labor meet for their energetic abilities—there was work waiting for their hands, in that western harvest where the laborers were few.

The Professor's appeal was urged upon the prayerful consideration of the young ladies by Miss Hopkins, and then, after a lengthy prayer by Deacon Ludlow, the meeting was dismissed. It was during the deacon's prayer that Ellen, who did not bow her head but went on with her knitting, accidentally beheld that which eventually led to undreamed of discoveries. The Professor, while upon his knees, fervently responding to the petition in behalf of his mission, drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and at the same time something besides, which fell unknown to him upon the floor, and was instantly recognized by Ellen, who resolved to obtain possession of it, if he did not discover his loss before his departure. Much to her gratification, he did not, and the room was vacated by all but Miss Hopkins, who was extinguishing the lights when Ellen approached the rostrum.

But the keen eyes of Miss Hopkins had made the discovery.

"A card! a playing card!" exclaimed the good woman, looking aghast, as she held up the veritable ace of diamonds.

Mrs. Timmons, who was conversing with Professor Cartzen in the hall, hurried nervously to where Miss Hopkins was standing holding the card at arm's length.

"Where did you find it? In one of the young ladies' books?" and she glanced sternly at the pile of Virgils on the table.

"No, but here upon the floor; nearly under your own chair. What a disgrace to the institution, if Professor Cartzen saw it, as he may have done."

Mrs. Timmons took the card and scrutinized it closely, but found nothing to aid her in the detection of its guilty owner.

"I would not have believed," she said, much agitated, "that there was a card in the house; and I cannot think now of a single young lady upon whom we might, with the least shadow of reason, cast our suspicions. I will question those that are in the hall." And she proceeded directly to the little group she had left gathered around Professor Cartzen.

The Professor had gone. Ellen could have told her as much. When the card was presented by Mrs. Timmons, and all of them closely in-

terrogated concerning it, each of them protested her ignorance as to its owner as well as to the existence of a pack of cards in the house. Mollie Raymond was appealed to, but assured them that to her knowledge a game of chance had not been played in the institution since she was a member of it. Her evidence was deemed conclusive, and Miss Lacy's suggestion that some one of the young ladies might unknowingly have brought it in her books from home, was received as a reasonable solution of the mystery. All appeared satisfied but Ellen Butler, who, having remained unnoticed in the library, and thus escaped Mrs. Timmons' interrogations, silently withdrew to her room.

CHAPTER V.

POOR ASSISTANCE.

"Oh, Aggie, do you think I can go?"

It was early in the morning, and Carrie stood before the window, despondently looking down the long, unbroken road which led to the village. The drifts were over the fences; the garden lay under a desert of snow, and the dazzling brightness of the sun did not in the least affect the thick frost upon the windows, which was slowly relenting to the warm fire within. The wind piped low and shrill through the rattling branches of the sycamores, and careered across the dreary fields, tossing up whirlpools of feathery snow, and piling higher the drifts it had heaped in the night. Carrie had grown impatient for Agnes to awake; she would not give up all hope until she had heard her opinion.

"Is the snow very deep?" asked Agnes, rubbing her drowsy eyes, and slowly rising from her pillow. "I was afraid last night you would be disappointed."

"The road looks utterly impassable," replied Carrie, dejectedly.

"It will not be to Mrs. Timmons and her zealous party," said Agnes, approaching the

window. "Twice this amount of snow would not keep them from the meeting to-day. They will break a road, and perhaps you will be able to follow in their wake. But I do think, Carrie, it were better for you not to venture out to-day."

"Do you, Aggie?" and she tried to smile through her tears. "It will be a very great disappointment, and yet I must not be unhappy about it, for I shall not have to sit alone in Miss Lacy's cold, dreary room. Oh, what wretched Sundays I have seen up there, when I have not been able to go to church. I do believe they made me wicked, for I used to keep wishing I could die, and a great many other unchristian-like things."

"I don't wonder," said Agnes. "I am glad you are to be with me to-day. We can spend the time together very pleasantly. I have some fine sacred music which I think you will enjoy hearing, besides a great many religious books. You must not be disappointed if you have to stay at home."

"But there is to be Communion to-day, and it is such a long time since I have been able to go." And she went to the window again to look over the snow-drifts. "Do you think, Aggie, that it would be very imprudent for me to venture out if Mrs. Timmons and a good many others break the path? It is only a little

way from the Presbyterian meeting-house to our chapel, you know."

"Walking through the snow will fatigue you very much, and it is excessively cold."

"I will dress warm enough," said Carrie, half pleadingly, "and perhaps one of the girls will help me in walking. If I could lean on somebody's arm, even part of the way, I think I might get along very well."

"But you would have to walk home alone."

"I know that, but then I could rest when I got here."

Agnes smiled to see every obstacle so easily overthrown. Carrie was evidently more determined to go than she would acknowledge. Suddenly she burst out in the joyful exclamation that Tom was shovelling the walks, and she had no doubt but Mrs. Timmons had ordered him to clear a path to the meeting-house; and if so, there was no longer any reason why she might not go.

"But you must not go alone, Carrie, even then. I will ask Sally, the dining-room girl, to go with you. She is a kind-hearted creature, and feels indebted to me for a few favors."

Carrie's face lit up most joyously. "Do you think she will? How kind it is of you to ask her! but, Aggie," she added, in a subdued tone, "it would really be asking too much of her to stay from her own church to oblige me."

"That will be the objection, no doubt, as she is a rigid Roman Catholic; but she is so kind-hearted and obliging I do not think she will refuse. I will see her after breakfast."

Just before the bell rang Ellen Butler came in, surprising them by an unusual change in her dress; a change which might indicate her intention to attend church that day, was she ever known to do such a thing. Instead of the sombre calico wrapper, her long-established breakfast and Sunday habit, she had on the plain brown merino, which all the girls knew to be the only "best dress" she possessed. Spreading the narrow skirt to its amplest extent, she bowed to them after Miss Lacy's most approved fashion, and expressed a well-feigned surprise at Miss Ryland's apparent intention to remain from church that day.

"And are *you* going?" asked Agnes, amused and perplexed. "I did not wonder that Carrie here should premeditate such an unwise adventure; but you—and on such a day!"

"I expect to astound the whole Institution—although my appearance among them last night has prepared them somewhat for this strong demonstration. You do not say that Carrie thinks of stepping out of doors to-day? Absurd! I would lock her up, if she were in my charge."

Ellen Butler was the occasion of much whispering at the breakfast-table that morning, and

none did she puzzle more than Carrie Seabury. The majority firmly believed Ellen to be "under conviction," but that supposition Carrie could not readily admit; yet what else would solve the mystery of her going to church that morning, when only the most zealous could be prevailed upon to venture out? Could it be that her flinty, unimpressible nature had yielded to the sympathetic influence of the prayer-meeting the night before?

"I did not find Sally," said Agnes, when they had returned to their room; "but I left a request for her to come up here as soon as she is at liberty. You must prepare for a disappointment, Carrie, for it is Communion to-day at her church as well as yours. I asked Tom about the paths, and he says that he is to clear them to the meeting-house as well as he can, yet the walking will not be good, as the wind keeps drifting the snow."

"Oh, I am sure I can get along," said Carrie, hopefully. "Ellen will assist me on my way there, if Sally does not go with me."

"But the storm may increase before noon, and then how will you get home?"

"In some way, I am certain," was the sanguine reply; and she sat down with her Bible and Prayer-book, to prepare her mind for the service. Soon afterwards, Ellen Butler came in, bringing two or three volumes, which she laid

on the table before Agnes. They had been talking about them at breakfast-time, and Ellen had promised to bring them down.

"See, here is Parker," said Ellen, and Agnes eagerly seized the book; "it is his 'Discourse on Religion,' the only one of his works that I have. It will give you a fair insight into his doctrines, and interest you, as well as remove your prejudices against him. There is a passage pencil-marked. Read it aloud. It is something that struck me forcibly, no doubt."

Agnes read—"In passing judgment on these different religious states, we are never to forget that there is no monopoly of Religion by any nation or any age. Religion itself is one and the same. He that worships truly, by whatever form, worships the Only God; He hears the prayer, whether called Brahma, Jehovah, Pan, or Lord, or called by no name at all. Each people has its prophets and its saints; and many a swarthy Indian who bowed down to wood and stone, many a grim-faced Calmuck who worshipped the great God of storms, many a Grecian peasant who did homage to Phœbus-Apollo when the sun rose or went down,—yes, many a savage, his hands smeared all over with human sacrifice, shall come from the East and the West, and sit down in the Kingdom of God, with Moses and Zoroaster, with Socrates and Jesus,—while men who called daily on the

living God, who paid their tribute, and bowed at the name of Christ, shall be cast out, because they did no more. Men are to be judged by what is given, not what is withheld."

"I like it, and I don't like it," said Agnes; "I apprehend poison."

"Parker is not an idolater," returned Ellen, significantly.

"But perhaps a blasphemer," said Agnes, turning over the leaves until she found another pencilled passage, which she read aloud.

"Every path where mortal feet now tread secure, has been beaten out of the hard flint by prophets and holy men who went before us, with bare and bleeding feet, to smooth a way for our reluctant tread. It is the blood of prophets that softens the Alpine rock. Their bones are scattered in all the high places of mankind. But God lays His burdens on no vulgar men. He never leaves their souls a prey. He paints Elysium on their dungeon wall. In the populous chambers of their heart, the light of Faith shines bright, and never dies. For such as are on the side of God, there is no cause to fear."

"How beautiful!" said Agnes, "and how true! Such sentiments move and inspire us. I hope I shall find more of them." She eagerly turned over the pages, reading here and there a sentence to herself, praising some, disapproving

many. Ellen sat sphinx-like before her, closely studying her expressive face.

"What shocks you now?" she coolly inquired, as Agnes shuddered and pushed the book from her.

"I do not like it; I have read enough—too much already; that last paragraph satisfies me."

"What is it? Read it aloud."

Agnes with little searching found the place.

"It is marked with a pencil, Ellen—your sign of indorsement. My faith in my Saviour's divinity I hold too sacred to court such assaults upon it. I know your views upon this subject, Ellen, therefore we will omit all argument."

"Well—read the extract."

"He is speaking of the Protestant party in comparison with the Papal, and those who are neither Papal nor Protestant. He says:

"This party has also its redundancies. It has taken much from the ungrateful doctrines of the darker system. Its followers rely on Authority, as all Protestants have done. They make a man depend on Christ, who died centuries ago—not on himself, who lives now; forgetting that it is not the death of Jesus that helps us, but the death of Sin in our heart; not the life of Jesus, the personal Christ, however divine, but the life of Goodness, Holiness, Love in our hearts. A Christ outside the man is nothing; his divine life nothing. God is not a

magician to blot sin out of the soul, and make man the same as if he had never sinned. Each man must be his own Christ, or he is no Christian."

There was a moment's silence. Agnes closed the book and laid it in Ellen's lap.

"I fear, Ellen," she said mildly, "that you are undermining rather than building up your faith. Such authors but sweep away old landmarks, and leave nothing—"

"We were to omit all argument upon the subject, I believe," harshly broke in Ellen. "Shall I carry back the other books as well as this, or would you like to examine them?"

"Oh, leave them, if you will: if I do not look at them to-day, I shall at my earliest opportunity. You are very kind to lend them to me. Is there not something in my book-case you would like to read? There is a package of new books father sent me last week—look them over, and take what you wish."

"Did you not expect Sally to come up before this?" asked Carrie, who was growing fearful of disappointment.

"I did, indeed," replied Agnes, looking at her watch; "it is nearly church-time now; I will go down and see her."

"How much trouble I am making you," said Carrie, self-reproachfully. Agnes put her finger on her little friend's lips and cheerfully hastened

to the kitchen, and Carrie sat down and bravely attempted to prepare herself for the unwelcome answer it was probable she would bring.

Ellen selected a few books and went out, and shortly after Carrie caught the sound of Agnes' returning footsteps, which were so quick and light she instantly augured good tidings, and ran to the door to meet her. Agnes was smiling; Carrie's heart beat loud and fast.

"I am going with you myself, Carrie."

"O Aggie, are you indeed?" and her dancing eyes overran with tears of joy; "will you? can you? How glad I am! What led you to think of doing such a thing?"

"Why, what could, but your persisting in venturing out this most uncomfortable day?" she said, with her happiest smile, and she immediately began to dress herself, for it was late. "You have set your heart so stubbornly upon going, I will not risk the result of your disappointment."

"O Aggie! good Aggie!" and Carrie fluttered about her, making vain attempts to assist her; "I never can be thankful enough; I never can begin to repay you; but isn't it selfish in me to let you go, rather than to stay at home?"

"It will be a pleasure for me to go with you, Carrie. Sally was unwilling to stay away from her church to-day, as she has not attended in

several weeks, and I felt it would be unkind to urge her. Mrs. Timmons says she will send the sleigh for us after church, if it should be stormy."

"Would she send it for me, if you did not go?"

"Yes, most willingly, I think. She is very obliging in such matters."

"Then—then—" stammered Carrie, blushing, and letting her eyes fall upon the carpet, "it will not be necessary for you to go unless you wish to, although I think you would like Mr. Bellamy very much."

"I shall go with you, Carrie, and don't fear too great an exercise of self-denial on my part. Even if it were an unpleasant task, I should have been more than repaid already by your happiness. When I was a little girl, I loved to go to the Episcopal Church. The service will carry me back to old and happy times. My mother was reared in the Episcopal Church."

"And did she ever leave it?"

"She was won away—as you will be some day, perhaps—by a husband."

"Oh no, I never shall be; I am sure I never could be," said Carrie, with an emphatic earnestness which Agnes only laughed at. "I would not leave the Church for the love of any man."

"So mother once thought, I dare say, but her heart ran away with her resolutions." Then the smile dropped from her mouth, and she added, reverently, "and what mattered it? She is numbered now in the blessed Church of the Redeemed."

CHAPTER VI.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

THEY were early at the little chapel, as Carrie had hoped they would be, for she loved the tranquillizing silence of the place before the service began. There was to her a soothing, prayer-inspiring influence in the subdued light, breaking softly through the narrow, alcoved windows, and streaming in a golden flood down from the transparent symbols above the altar. She loved to sit there in the transept corner, unmindful of the entrance of worshippers and forgetful of every sorrow, until her thoughts were severed from things of earth, and she realized the presence of the Lord in his holy temple, and her heart kept silence before Him.

The church, though small and unpretending in architectural effect, was a gem of the unadorned Gothic, containing nothing incongruous with the purpose for which it was built, although many of the puritanical inhabitants of the place ascribed to Popish sentiment the cross upon the spire, and particularly the beautiful chancel-window. Agnes, though educated to a sensitive perception of Romish tendencies, and

accustomed to the plain, whitewashed walls, square windows, and rostrum-like pulpits of the old Presbyterian meeting-houses of the rural districts where she had lived, was gratified beyond measure with the outward and inward appearance of the little Gothic chapel. The symbolical representations—those eloquent preachers in a silent church—did not strike her unfavorably, for she clearly interpreted their meaning, and was impressed by what they brought to her remembrance. She had never objected to the cross as the badge of Papacy, for she knew no reason why Christians should cast aside that emblem of their Redeemer's suffering and death, though the Romish Church claimed and abused it. She knew that in the early Church it was the chief emblem—the chief external mark of those who followed the Crucified, and was found in the houses of the living and upon the tombs of the dead. Was it powerless longer to remind Christians of their redemption from sin, and their hope of eternal life? The Crown spake to her of the one laid up in heaven for the faithful unto death; the Anchor, of the hope sure and steadfast; the White Lily, of the pure heart that shall yet see God; and the descending Dove, of the Blessed Comforter whose unseen wings shadowed the temple. Her doubt-sick soul was soothed by the atmosphere of the place. Upon the altar—covered with a fair linen cloth, and in

the full tide of the crimson splendor the sunshine drifted down from the cross in the chancel-window—was spread the Holy Feast, "the Memorial Christ hath commanded us to make." Agnes had never seen that table spread in a more fitting place—where there was so little discordant with her feelings of reverence and awe. From a child she had regarded it with such emotions, although she had beheld it observed in a manner she early deemed inconsistent with Christian humility and contrition. But there the silence and solemnity powerfully impressed her, and when the first low, trembling strain from the organ crept in ripples of enrapturing sound softly through the stillness, followed by a melody in which the Cherubim might cry, Agnes bowed her head, and let the flood carry her wheresoever it would.

Before the last enravishing strain of the voluntary had ebbed away as softly as it began, and the surpliced priest had risen from kneeling at the altar, Agnes had grown more calm, and able to control her feelings. She looked towards Carrie, who sat with her Prayer-book open before her, her eyes fixed in sad thoughtfulness upon the holy table, and wished for the peaceful faith that made her life flow over its rough, rocky course so smoothly. Then she looked into her own heart and bade its complaining to cease, and to open every window for

God's sunshine to enter, instead of barring out the blessed light by vexatious doubts. She anticipated little enjoyment in the service, for she believed it would be cold and formal—calculated rather to destroy than encourage spiritual warmth; but in her soul's hunger she resolved to make the dry, scanty morsel as sweet as possible, grateful if she found but a crumb that was nutritious. That frame of mind subdued her prejudices against the Church, and prepared her to weigh with fairness all she might listen to or behold.

Carrie handed her a Prayer-book open at the Morning Service, and with the markers so arranged that she might find the places with the help of the rubrics. Agnes examined it until she was convinced of her ability to follow the congregation without much difficulty. In spite of the contemptuous sneering she had been accustomed to hear cast upon the Book of Common Prayer, she was not narrow-minded enough to withhold all respect for a volume that had been the comfort and guide of holy and devout men, the bulwark of a mighty Church—the rigid conservator of a faith, and which contained prayers and praises that had arisen from the dens and caves of the earth, from the martyr's pile, and from the inquisitorial rack. Aunt Lottie had taught her much that she knew of its history. She should never forget sitting in that little parlor

one night, and hearing Aunt Lottie sing the grand old *Gloria in Excelsis*, after telling her how it was born in the early Church, not much more than a hundred years after Christ. As Aunt Lottie sang, the child had covered her face, and heard the mighty anthem rolling up from the dusky past; from the angel choir over Judea's plains; from the army of the cross in captivity and victory, until, swelled by every age, it was lifted throneward by cherubim in heaven, and holy men of earth,—the never-ending song of the redeemed.

Since then, she had been taught to call the liturgy of the Church an icy formality, chaining down the devotional spirit that would rise unfettered to its God; and her prejudices might have blinded her that morning, had not her hungry soul been bitterly craving for food.

The white surplice of the priest did not offend her. She understood its significance, its representation of the innocence and righteousness with which Christ's ministers should be clothed. She felt it was a fitting robe for him who led the prayers of the people, and ministered at the altar. She was reminded of the hosts of heaven as described in the Apocalypse, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean," and she also remembered the vestments of the Jewish priests, who, by God's own appointment, were to put on a white linen ephod at the time of public service.

She arose with the congregation, when the minister began the service by reading, in a solemn manner, two or three passages from Holy Writ, which spake of God's presence in His holy temple, and of repentance as an acceptable sacrifice, teaching men to trust in Him for mercy, and to humble themselves before Him in sorrow for their sins. She listened attentively to the brief and affectionate Exhortation that followed, in which they were called upon to confess their sins to their Heavenly Father, and that with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, and to ask those things which are requisite as well for the body as the soul. He besought them, in words reminding them of the solemnity of the act, to accompany him unto the heavenly throne, with a pure heart and humble voice,—and Agnes felt, as she knelt with the rest, that if any mocked God in their prayer, it was not the fault of the service, for that would rather awaken them to contrition, sincerity, and zeal.

She did not follow the Prayer-book during the Confession, but listened to Carrie's low, tremulous voice, and never was she more sensible of God's nearness to those that call upon Him, than when the prayers of that whole congregation went up together in acknowledgment of much sinfulness and utter unworthiness, and entreaty for mercy and divine assistance. She

could but join in the cry, and abase herself before the All-seeing Eye, to whom high and low, the strong and the weak, the sorely tempted and the little tried, are alike "most miserable offenders."

Agnes was listening too devoutly to misinterpret the Absolution that followed, and experienced the comfort which that declaration of forgiveness grants unto those who have cast their burden of sin upon the Crucified. And then, when the voice of the congregation arose again, in repeating with the minister the simple, all-comprehending Prayer of our Lord, Agnes saw the beautiful construction of the service, which would prepare us, by exhortation and confession of our unworthiness, to rank ourselves more fitly among the children of God, as we do when we call Him "Our Father." She was impressed with the propriety of engrafting that perfect prayer into a form of public worship, and wondered she had heard it so seldom in the churches of her father's communion.

And thus throughout the service she found nothing offensive, nothing discordant with her idea of what was fit for the worship of the Most High. She wondered why she had ever called that service cold and formal, and acknowledged she had spoken from ignorance and prejudice. The chanting of the anthems first hymned by the hallowed lips of David, or holy men of ages

past, thrilled and exalted her with wondrous delight, and she admired the fitness of praising God in the heavenly strains of His most inspired servants. The reading of a portion of the Psalms, alternately, by the minister and the congregation, struck her less favorably at first than when she had dwelt upon the subject for a moment, and satisfied herself as to the probable cause. The Psalms belonged to the Jewish liturgy, and were chanted in the temple, one choir of Levites answering to another. There was the ancient example. She saw that when the congregation read thus alternately with the minister, they are assisted in fixing their attention, and a greater majority became interested than if they were merely listeners. She also observed that the Psalms were divided into portions for every morning and evening of the month, and commended an arrangement which would make its observers so well acquainted with that "Epitome of the Bible," adapted to all the purposes of devotion.

No part of the service made a deeper impression upon her mind than the repeating, by the congregation, with the minister, their confession of faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed. It contained little that Agnes did not unwaveringly hold, when free from the doubt which had troubled her of late. She recognized in it the powerful bond which preserved to the Episcopal

Church its unity, unshaken by the storms of strange doctrines without and bitter feud and schism within. It was the "mighty bulwark," as Luther had called it—the preserver of the one common faith—as well as the preserver of doctrines it did not express or allude to in the faintest manner; doctrines which Agnes considered contrary to the plain teachings of Scripture. Her prejudices against the Service might be removed, she thought; but she should have no patience to hear of the divine institution of Episcopacy or the exclusive tenet of apostolical succession.

Nor was she displeased by the reverential bowing of the head when faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son, our Lord, was openly confessed; for was it not a universal practice in the early Church, probably founded on that Scripture where it is declared that "God hath given him a name which is above every name; that, at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." She was willing to receive it as a testimonial of inward humility, and a due acknowledgment that the true eternal Son of God is verily divine, and is the only Saviour of the world.

The repeated confession and praise of the Blessed Trinity was to her the golden thread upon which the rosary of worship was strung.

The *Gloria Patri* burst out at the close of every anthem; and the Litany, that earnest petition, expressing the need of every contrite heart, addressed Christ as the very God, entreating him for mercy and pardon. "Ah!" thought she, "it were impossible for the blight of Unitarianism to creep in here. No wonder that the ranks of the Episcopal Church have not been broken before it, and scattered in confusion, as the hosts of Calvin have been."

She was not chilled and depressed by the reading of prayers from the ritual. They could as easily be said from memory, and she observed that many of the congregation did not follow their books, but knelt and fervently responded. The psalms and hymns used in her father's church were prayers and praises, and prescribed in books. The best extemporaneous prayers always had the appearance of having been composed before. She knew her father's prayers by heart, and she never wished him to change them for a new form of words. His morning and evening prayers by the home fireside—how she yearned to listen to them again—did she not know the very expression he would use in her behalf, the thanksgiving he would offer for her return?

Her spiritual sense was gratified by the sublimity and simplicity of the prayers offered up by the minister, and to which the people said

Amen. She was not pained by hesitating pauses, omissions, and even improper language, as she had been at other times. There was no relating of personal experience to God, no detailing of what the whole congregation were acquainted with, no flattering of some brother or sister in the congregation, no thrusting a sword at a neighbor's faults; nor was it merely a fine oration on the goodness and perfectness of God, or some other topic, scarcely containing a petition. It was the lifting up to the heavenly throne of the burden of every soul present, and that in words all could unite in and understand. It was not the prayer of the minister alone, but the prayer of the whole congregation; and Agnes knew, by her own experience, that it is better for the people, when they be agreed "touching any thing which they shall ask," that they should know the prayers which they are to offer.

Agnes had been accustomed to hear but one chapter of the Bible read at public service. She was glad that Episcopalians had so much of that best of preaching, for no less than six portions, from both the Old and the New Testament, were read in that morning's service. She saw that these portions were so appointed as in a measure to refer to and explain each other, and she thought what a blessing such an arrangement must be to the ignorant and infirm, and to the poor, who had little leisure through the week to

study the Holy Word. She had heard it remarked that Episcopalians were generally better acquainted with Biblical History than members of most other denominations, and doubted it no longer; for aside from the plentiful portion furnished them every Sunday, their circle of holy days gave them a yearly retrospect of the important facts of Christianity, leading them every year over the blessed track of their Saviour's life. Her belief that great errors prevailed in the Church, whose system of worship she considered thus praiseworthy, prevented her from seeing that the reading of so much Scripture in the public service was the very guard of that Church against the introduction of false doctrines to her hearers. They are enabled to weigh all things by the word of God, and error could not long exist in such open collision with the law and the testimony.

The reading of the commandments by the minister, the people asking, at the close of each, mercy for past transgression and grace to keep this law in time to come, followed by the summing up of all in the two great commandments—the love of God and the love of our neighbor was to Agnes an important and appropriate part of the service, and she was impressed, when the Gospel was read, by the people's rising as if in reverence to the words and acts of the Lord Jesus himself.

"What is Truth"* was the text of that morning's sermon, startling Agnes when she heard it, for it was the present inquiry of her dissatisfied soul. She doubted the power of the preacher or any one else to solve the long-controverted mystery, to separate the counterfeit from the real. Mr. Bellamy was a scholar of elevated and mature thought, but where was the vision sufficiently clear to pierce the chaos of schism, false doctrine, and theological feud?

"Truth," saith the preacher, "is not as infidels and too many latitudinarian Christians would have it, to each mind what it sincerely believes. All Holy Scripture unites with all we see of God's providence—with every known fact that has transpired, between the silent stars above us and the silent graves beneath—to teach us the stern but wholesome lesson, that *mistake*, even when blameless, is followed by sure disaster. He who acts as if things were as they *are not*, is soon or late ruined by harsh conflicts with facts as they *are*. . . . *He that believes the truth, and obeys, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned*. . . . Happily and mercifully, inability to decide, or even erroneous

* The following discourse is taken from the excellent sermon of the Rev. T. P. Tyler, upon "The Authority of the Church in Matters of Faith." It was preached on the occasion of a clerical meeting, at Christ Church, Rochester. January, 1857.

decision in regard to many mooted theological questions—is not fatal to the spiritual life of the soul. But some truths *must* be believed—some error *is* fatal. How can one know, among many conflicting views, that his is certainly the truth? how be sure another creed, the opposite of his, may not be right?"

Then he spoke earnestly of those who had no interest in the important question, and of others far different and happiest of all, who, untroubled by doubt, had always rested in perfect confidence in the church in which they were born and nurtured. Agnes envied such: why had she been tossed out of the harbor to buffet with the storm? Then he drew a picture portraying her own condition.

"There remains another class, rendered numerous by the many divisions and fierce controversies of modern times. Ill grounded in religious truth in childhood, or nurtured in some system which they outgrew, and rejected as their minds matured; left thus afloat, with but little time for investigation, they have passed through a varied experience,—now involved in some transient excitement, and thence drifting towards infidelity or indifference, seeking rest but finding none, until, wearied with change, they have sought repose at least, in the settled order and staid services of the Church."

Agnes did not receive that conclusion as pro-

phetic of what her own experience would be. She was averse to such an event, preferring rather to dash around the wild whirlpool, than be dormant in the stagnant pool of a dead church for the sake of repose.

"Once planted in the Church under the teaching no longer of an individual preacher merely, but of a matured system, a liturgy with which the faith is interwoven, a perpetual series of observances, old yet ever new, exhibiting and explaining, now one, and now another momentous truth, speculative difficulties have been removed, and more and more real have become the words—I believe. Still a certain faith seems a logical impossibility. How can they be sure they are right, and that other bodies of Christians among whom are learned and devout men, are wrong? Must they assume *their* judgment infallible? How can they, without assuming themselves more wise and learned than others, positively affirm what is Truth? . . .

"Some good, able, and earnest men have supposed that the Holy Spirit guides each individual, who studies the Scriptures with devout prayer, into the truth. Such was the opinion of two of the best men of the last century—Wesley and Whitefield. It is stated of each, that he thus prayed and studied, on the subject especially of divine decrees. None can doubt that they did so most faithfully, yet they be-

came earnest advocates of precisely opposite views. . . .

"Our blessed Lord at first enabled His Apostles, by direct inspiration miraculously attested, to teach the truth to those whom they gathered into the Church. While inspired men were its pastors, there could be neither uncertainty nor difference as to the truths required to be professed for admission to it by baptism. . . . The question that concerns us is—How this certainty as to the articles of the creed and their meaning was continued, when the age of miracles, of direct communication with the source of truth, had passed away. . . . The possession of the New Testament Scriptures simply, was not designed to answer this purpose. They contain, indeed, and when rightly understood, they teach, the whole truth, but not in the form of definite doctrinal statements, but of Gospels written for, and letters addressed to the churches already established. The writers naturally refer to *the* faith as well known, believed, and professed in common by them and their fellow-Christians. And even had it been definitely and expressly set forth, still it would have been of itself insufficient, for human language is always capable of different interpretations. Not the written or printed letter simply, but a *living* power must determine from age to age, What is truth."

Agnes recognized the significant assertion.

It was a new thought to her,—a letting in of light,—but what and where was that living power, that faithful preserver of the faith? Was not a search for it as hopeless as her groping for the truth? She anticipated in part the answer of the preacher, but did not expect to adopt his views as fully as she did.

He affirmed that there was no such perpetual living power but the *Church itself*. (What Church? murmured Agnes, unsatisfied.) He would show whence the Church has this authority, what its nature and limits, and how it is exercised. He was aware that many good men regarded it as detracting in some way from the sole sufficiency of Holy Scripture, and from the due responsibility of private judgment. Respecting such scruples, but convinced of the truth, and his own absolute need of this external support, and its sufficiency to maintain a certain faith amid the conflicting views and multiplied divisions of our times, he advanced it in no disputatious spirit, but in hope it might be to some souls a footing on the rock, amid the winds and waves of doubt and controversy. He spoke with earnestness and feeling, and Agnes' heart sent up a silent amen.

"The Church *must of necessity* have had a certain authority committed to it, to determine what is the essential faith. At its beginning, it was constantly called to determine what was the

faith that candidates must solemnly confess for admission. It extended its branches from Jerusalem over Asia Minor, Southern Europe, and Northern Africa, establishing a branch of itself in every city before the Apostles' death. Everywhere these local churches required belief in the same creed, *in the same sense*. Intercourse between them was slow and difficult. The Epistles and Gospels were written at different times for widely separated churches. It was not till the second century that the whole New Testament was possessed by all, but the truth had been taught to all by their inspired founders, and the same creed was required by all from their converts."

Then he eloquently dwelt upon the constant action of this wide-spread Church everywhere. One by one the Apostles were gathered to their rest, leaving others as their successors, but this did not stop the work of the Church, nor interrupt the continued teaching of the faith delivered to it. When the precious legacies of the Apostles, the Gospels and Epistles, were obtained by any church, they could be read in consistency with this foreknown faith. The Church had and exercised over individual judgment no more authority than every modern denomination exercises. Consider it established in thousands of localities throughout the then known world, taught in each place by inspired men the great

essential truths of Christianity, is it not evident that here is a broad foundation for a perpetual, living, authoritative testimony to this faith? — (Agnes could but silently assent)—how well-nigh impossible would have been a universal departure from it.

He spoke of the councils assembled, when perverse men attempted to give a false meaning to some articles of the Apostles' Creed—councils that spake with the voice of the whole Church. On grounds of mere human probability, apart from any divine authority to determine the truth, and apart from any promise that the faith should not fail, was it not well-nigh impossible that the churches everywhere should so soon have departed from the truth, all in the same direction, and all to agree in the same error?

"But we are far removed from the early Church," thought Agnes; "and who can distinguish its voice in this tumultuous din?"

"Those sent to found this Church," continued the preacher, "are sent by Christ, as He is sent by the Father, with His promise to be with them *always, even unto the end of the world*, and, as a consequence of this Almighty Presence, that the gates of hell, the powers of darkness and error, shall never prevail against her; whereby, we are assured, that, as a whole, she cannot fall from the faith once delivered to the saints."

Agnes believed the heavenly promise, but was prone to reject his assertion that the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Church Catholic had retained the primitive faith. Her memory reverted for a moment to phases of its history drawn by, as she deemed, reliable and unbiassed authorities. Though disagreeing with him on this fundamental point, she hoped he would assist her in yet discovering the living power—the preserver of the truth.

He dwelt briefly upon the authority of the Church as the divinely appointed expounder of the faith; and then, in conclusion, made answer to the inquiry: But of what utility and advantage to us is this authority, as it can be exercised only by the universal consent of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church, which, since the fifth century, has been prevented by divisions from any common council, discussion, or action?

“The providence of our Lord, overruling the malice of the devil, hastened on the attacks of Anti-Christ upon the essentials of faith, while the Church was yet united to resist and repel these onsets. Every possible heresy touching the Holy Trinity, and the nature and person of Christ, was then urged with all the acumen and subtilty of Grecian logic; and in that venerable formula, the Creed of Nice, was met and condemned by the faith of the Apostles, drawn up by one general council, enlarged by

another, confirmed by several; declared by one to be the creed of the Catholic Church, to which it was unlawful to add any thing—as we have seen Rome do within the last few months—and more than all, used for those fifteen centuries in the constant worship of every church from the rising to the setting sun. . . . Surely this united voice of Christendom, from apostolic days until now, speaking with one mouth the same thing, in the same words, is the Pillar and Ground of the Truth against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. . . . On the testimony of the Church of God, in all times and in all places, rests our faith.

“And, as we conclude from the facts that revelation has ceased, that Holy Scripture contains all that is necessary to salvation, so, from the impossibility of any universal consent of the Church on other points than those of our creed, we conclude that therein is contained all that is essential for us to believe. While we grieve for the divisions of Christendom, we rest with love and confiding faith upon the teaching of our own branch of the Catholic Church, which gives us the ancient creeds as the sum of the faith, her own articles as her opinions, her liturgy as the true form of devotion. Agitated by no winds of doctrine, disturbed by no new interpretations, we have thus, in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

"Oh, what a haven of rest, were I sure it were one of safety," thought Agnes, when the sermon was ended. "Was the repose of those within it but a cold, dangerous slumber nigh unto death? Was not this boasted Apostolic Church but a child of Papal Rome, that had disowned her corrupt mother only from political and mercenary motives? Were not Bonner, Laud, and Cranmer in the line of her holy apostolic successors? Were not her garments drenched with the blood of the saints—men of whom the world was not worthy; her hands filled with extortions and bribes, and yet did she claim to be the Bride and Body of Christ, the fulness of him who filleth all in all?" Her mind was burdened with inquiries she longed to have answered by some one attached to the Church, in whose beautiful service she had found spiritual enjoyment.

The collection that morning, in accordance with the usual custom, was for the suffering poor of the parish, and her unhappy thoughts were dispelled by listening to the appropriate sentences the rector read from Holy Writ as the plates were passing through the congregation. Then followed the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church Militant, in which she fervently joined, and was then prepared beneficially to witness the gathering of the little company around the table of their Lord.

As usual, an opportunity was given for the withdrawal of those that desired; and while they were leaving the church, turning their backs upon the precious memorial their Lord and Saviour commanded them to make, the organ sent forth a low, sad voluntary, as if in entreaty for all to return, and eat of that which nourishes them unto everlasting life.

Carrie knelt long in silent prayer before she rose to go forward; and then turning her face, radiant with the peace within, asked Agnes to accompany her. Agnes had felt herself freely invited before, when the solemn invitation was read which makes no requirements of those who would receive that holy sacrament, but that they should draw near with faith, in love and charity with their neighbors, the intention of leading a new life, and of following the commandments of God, and of walking henceforth in his holy ways; but, weeping, she refused, and bowing her head, called bitterly unto God to despise not the sacrifice of her troubled spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE RECTORY.

THEY found upon reaching the porch, after the service, that the snow had been falling fast, and the paths were drifted over again. Tom was not there with the sleigh, but doubting not he would soon arrive, they sat down to wait for him, and in a little while were all alone. Both were silent and thoughtful. Carrie's face was a psalm of thanksgiving; Agnes', clouded and distressed.

While they sat there, forgetful of each other's presence and their detention, Mr. Bellamy issued from the vestry, and, crossing the church, was about making his exit at the transept-door, when he descried them. Immediately approaching them, he cordially extended his hand towards Carrie, expressing his surprise at seeing her at church that day, inquiring after her health, and then warmly invited them to the rectory to dinner. Agnes expressed her thanks, but was confident Mrs. Timmons would send for them very soon. But Mrs. Timmons might forget them, he pleasantly urged; it would never do for him to leave them there in such uncer-

tainty; they must go home with him; the Barley Wood sleigh would have to pass his house on the way to the church, and his little Charlie would watch for it from the library window. Agnes attempted another refusal, but to no purpose. A moment after, they were following Mr. Bellamy, who made a path for them through the snow, and led them to the door of the pretty cottage, where a window-full of happy faces were watching for his return.

What a home-like apartment it was into which they were unceremoniously ushered. It was the library, nursery, and dining-room of the Litchfield rectory, as cheerful as five happy children could make it, and as orderly as they could possibly allow. There were large cases filled with books; a writing-table in the deep bay-window, under which was piled a Babel-tower of toys and primers, evidently untouched that day. Mrs. Bellamy, who had been unable to attend the service that morning, was lying upon the couch by the fire, her pillow and the carpet around her strewn with prettily illustrated cards, descriptive of scenes in Bible history, with which she had been striving to amuse and instruct the noisy baby Georgie, a fat little urchin of four summers or more, who shouted lustily upon his father's entrance, and, in spite of the strangers and his mother's rebukes, persisted in clambering up to his arms. Mrs. Bel-

lamy welcomed them most cordially. She was fearful Carrie had been imprudent in venturing out on such a day, and hoped no sad consequences would follow—yet she could not blame her for the venture—it was hard to stay from church on Communion Sunday; for then, if ever, the Christian yearned for the courts of the living God. The morning had seemed long and dreary to her—the snow driving across the windows, and the wind blowing in a direction which prevented her from catching the sound of the organ and the singing.

Charlie, a sturdy boy, fast rushing out of boyhood, was stationed in the window to watch for the Barley Wood sleigh. Georgie was crowing upon his father's knee, and Sophie and Allie stole from the sofa, where they had been demurely seated since the entrance of the visitors, to claim their share of his attention. Their childish prattle and happy laugh broke musically upon Agnes' ear; and, dividing her attention between them and Mrs. Bellamy, who directed her conversation mostly to Carrie, she secretly hoped that Tom would not break upon them too soon.

"You have been a pupil at Barley Wood for some time, have you not, Miss Strickland?" inquired Mrs. Bellamy. "Your face has grown very familiar to me."

Agnes replied without correcting the mistake,

which had occurred several times; but in this instance, it caught Carrie's attention, and she instantly informed Mrs. Bellamy of her error.

"Ryland? Ryland?" repeated Mrs. Bellamy, thoughtfully to herself; "it is not a common name, but it strikes me very familiarly. I have something associated with that name, I am sure;" and she repeated it over several times, taxing her memory to the utmost.

"Perhaps you are acquainted with my father," said Agnes. "He is a Presbyterian clergyman at Breckford, and has been for nearly twenty years."

"Oh, I remember now!" said Mrs. Bellamy, partly relieved of her perplexity; "but your father could not have been the person I am thinking of. This was a Richard Ryland, a military officer of some kind. Strange, that I should have forgotten the circumstance connected with that name."

"My father's name is Richard, and he was formerly a brigadier-general," said Agnes, flushing with excited interest and curiosity.

"Can it be the same?" said Mrs. Bellamy, appealing to her husband, who had left the children when he caught the subject of their conversation. Then turning to Agnes, she eagerly asked—

"Was your mother's name Mary? Was her maiden name Mary Moore?"

Agnes assured them of those facts, looking strangely puzzled.

"And this is Agnes Ryland?" continued Mrs. Bellamy, her face overflowing with affection and joy, as she kissed her warmly. "It is a great many years since—"

Although Agnes could not see Mr. Bellamy's face, she was confident that by some look or sign he had interrupted his wife, and prevented her saying more. There was a momentary pause, on Mrs. Bellamy's part, and on that of Agnes as well. The conversation was instantly resumed by Mr. Bellamy.

"We had a little acquaintance with your mother, a number of years ago, when you were but a babe. She is dead now, is she not?—and you are her only child?"

"I never had a brother or sister, and mother was taken before my remembrance," replied Agnes sadly.

"And your father is the Presbyterian minister at Breckford? I know him by reputation very well. He has written strongly against the Church,—I have his tract in opposition to the Episcopacy. You are firmly settled in his faith, no doubt?"

"Yes; if I may say I am settled in any thing," replied Agnes abstractedly.

"Having known your mother," said Mr. Bellamy, with much feeling, "you must not be

surprised at our interest in you hereafter. I was but slightly acquainted with her; but this much of her heart I know—the most earnest desire of her soul was, that her daughter should walk in God's way all the days of her life."

Mr. Bellamy went back to his seat in the window-niche, and talked but little to the children, who were soon gathered around him. Agnes' wet eyelids lay heavy on her cheeks. She longed to ask more; she knew there was more to be told. She felt herself to be standing in a mysterious relation to Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy, whom, until that hour, she had considered as entire strangers. Mrs. Bellamy appeared sensible of her feelings, and anxious to relieve them.

"So, then, you knew Aggie's mother?" said Carrie. "Nothing makes me more happy than to find those who knew mine—if they will only tell me every thing they can about her. How she looked, and dressed, and talked—every thing they can remember."

"I saw Mrs. Ryland but once," said Mrs. Bellamy, "yet I have a distinct recollection of her appearance, and think her daughter bears a striking resemblance to her." Then turning to Agnes, she asked if her mother was not reared in the Church.

"Yes," replied Agnes, her face brightening a little, for she seized upon the question as a clue

to the explanation she sought. Her mother's relation to the Episcopal Church, might reasonably be the cause of Mrs. Bellamy's interest in her. Agnes was half mortified at the secret vexation she had endured.

"Mother was never confirmed," said Agnes, "although, at the time of her betrothal, she was preparing to be. Father's influence prevented her from taking that step, so averse was he to the Episcopal Church, although a non-professor of religion. It was not until two years after their marriage, and shortly after mother's death, that he professed Christianity, and joined the Presbyterian Church, to which all of his family belonged. He entered the ministry, and has been the pastor at Breckford for nearly twenty years."

"And did your mother return to the Episcopal Church before she died?" asked Mrs. Bellamy.

"I never heard that she did. She is buried in the old Presbyterian graveyard, at Breckford."

"And you strictly adopt your father's faith, I may conclude," said Mrs. Bellamy kindly.

Agnes sighed, and sadly replied:

"I was certainly educated in that faith, but it were difficult for me now to define my creed."

"How sad that uncertainty must be to you," said Mrs. Bellamy, with feeling, "and how

dangerous. The thing I ask God most earnestly for, is, that my children may, in childhood, become so firmly rooted and grounded in His precious faith, they may never be tossed by doubt and unbelief. And what reason we have," she said, addressing Carrie more particularly, "for loving the Church that nourishes and protects her lambs, receiving them within her arms when infants, leading them step by step from one duty of life to another, until, with her prayers, she bears them safe through the shadowy portal, to the pastures where the wolf prowleth not."

"I wish Aggie was one of us," the impulsive Carrie could not help saying, gazing earnestly into the downcast face of her friend. "She would be happy then, and Ellen Butler's questions would not trouble her any more."

Agnes was startled by this innocent revelation of her affairs, and cast a glance of entreaty towards the child, who quickly crimsoned, and began questioning herself to ascertain, if possible, the extent of the fault her simplicity had led her to commit. Agnes saw her discomfiture, and was pained by it, and would have removed it, but Mr. Bellamy's return to their circle prevented her mentioning the subject again. He urged them to dinner, which had been waiting for them some little time.

Tom did not come, and as it was already past

noon, they thought it useless to expect him any longer. The snow had stopped falling, the sun was out, and they had reason to hope that in an hour or more, the path would be broken sufficiently for them to return to the Seminary. Had Agnes been alone, the bad walking would not have detained her, but on Carrie's account, she proposed remaining a while longer. Mrs. Bellamy thought their haste unnecessary, and urged them to stay all night—a tempting invitation to both. They stood hesitating, each calling upon the other to decide, when Mr. Bellamy interposed, with a proposition for them to remain with Mrs. Bellamy that afternoon, or go with him to Sunday-school, and after the services he would take them home, as he had a parochial visit to make in that neighborhood. Carrie concluded to remain with Mrs. Bellamy, although she found it difficult to fix her choice, and Agnes expressed a desire to attend the Sunday-school.

The inclement weather prevented the usual attendance of children that day, although there was a larger number present than Agnes expected to see. Mr. Bellamy had told her, during their short walk from the rectory, that it was a prescribed custom in the Church for the minister of every parish publicly to catechise the children under his pastoral care, and that the Communion Sundays were generally appointed

for that purpose. He found the Catechism for her in the Prayer-book, and she interested herself in examining it before the children were summoned to the chancel, within which the rector stood robed in his surplice.

She had read in the Office for the Baptism of Infants, that the sponsors were there solemnly charged to remember it as their part and duty that the infant be taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he had made by them, and that they chiefly should provide him instruction in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and that he was to be sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the Church Catechism before being brought to the bishop for confirmation.

Her remembrance of the Westminster Catechism associated with her childhood was any thing but pleasant; those long, hard words, strung together in sentences she never could understand. By dint of hard study, and many tears, she had finally mastered it, and repeated it, at an early age, as accurately as she could her multiplication table, and with scarcely more spiritual advancement and enlightenment. Instead of a large system or body of divinity, calculated to puzzle and mystify little heads to

whom settled points of battled theology were worse than nothing, she found in the Church Catechism only a short and full explication of the baptismal vow. It did not teach the opinion of any particular church or people, but what the whole body of Christians over the world might believe. Agnes was surprised to find in it none of those doctrines held by the Episcopal Church in wide variance with its opponents. If anywhere it might seem otherwise, it was in the doctrine of the Sacraments; but even that was worded with so much caution and temper as not to contradict any particular church. Agnes could subscribe to every thing it taught, and thought that all Christians might if they would duly consider it. She admired a Catechism "so short that the youngest children may learn it by heart, and yet so full that it contains all things necessary to salvation."

After a short and appropriate service, adapted to the worship and praise of infant minds, the children went forward to the chancel, while the congregation were singing the hymn endeared to many of us from a like association. Agnes was moved to tears by the beautiful and impressive sight. With radiant faces the little flock gathered around their shepherd, who was singing fervently with the rest:

"Saviour, who thy flock art feeding,
With the shepherd's kindest care,

All the feeble gently leading,
While the lambs thy bosom share :
Now, these little ones receiving,
Fold them in thy gracious arm ;
There, we know, thy word believing,
Only there, secure from harm.

Never from thy pasture roving,
Let them be the lion's prey ;
Let thy tenderness so loving,
Keep them all life's dangerous way ;
Then, within thy fold eternal,
Let them find a resting-place ;
Feed in pastures ever vernal,
Drink the rivers of thy grace."

What a mighty little army they were, uplifting so high the banner of the Cross. How much the great Captain relied upon their strength; dear to Him as a heavenly host was the least among that lisping band, and more precious to the Church militant than wealth, principalities, or powers. The day was not far distant, when with Israel's God to aid them, their valor must defend the bulwarks of Zion, their fortitude endure and repel the assaults against her, and their zeal bring eternal trophies within her walls. It was well for the Church to nourish and guard her little ones, to place them lovingly in the centre of the fold, and to watch by night and day, lest the foe should steal in and single one of them for his prey.

The lesson for that day was upon the Ten Commandments, and the two things chiefly to

be learned by them, our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbor. Agnes was pleased and interested by Mr. Bellamy's simple and instructive explanations of the Divine Law, and the correct answers that were readily made to his questions. It was plainly his object to make them clearly comprehend the meaning and force of every clause they recited; and they displayed a culture and understanding that could not have resulted from less faithful training. Agnes could not fail to observe that they were addressed as Christian children, members of Christ and His Church, rightful inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; and therein she found something more to admire in the system of a Church she still believed to be founded mainly upon error. Like the tender Master, it took the little children and blessed them, forbidding them not, in their spotless innocence, to be made partakers of holy privileges, nor excluding them from their rightful inheritance until they were old enough for the day of grace to dawn upon them, for the Holy Spirit to visit them and convert their hearts, making them new creatures. She thought of what Kingsley has said upon this subject—that men have perverted the teaching of their Lord, "Except ye become as little children," into a meaning like this, "Except little children become like unto us grown-up people, they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER VIII.

LOOKING FOR THE FOUNDATION STONES.

CHARLIE had gone to bring up the sleigh, and Agnes and Carrie were putting on their bonnets and cloaks. They had gladly accepted Mrs. Bellamy's warm invitation to spend a day with her in the ensuing week, and were little inclined to leave that cheerful, attractive fireside.

"I have a favor to ask of Mr. Bellamy," said Carrie, timidly approaching him as he stood before the window, rapt in thought. Her voice aroused him, and he addressed her with a kindly interest that overcame her diffidence. She wished to obtain some books of him, to read during Lent.

"It will afford me great pleasure to furnish you with reading," he said, immediately opening the book-case. "I intended to have offered you the free use of my library some time ago, and hope you will not hesitate to select what you please from it hereafter. Is there any book, in particular, that you wish now to obtain?"

Carrie mentioned Miss Sewell's "Readings for Lent." "An excellent choice, and I am glad I have it for you. Here is Kip's 'Lenten Fast,'

and also Jeremy Taylor's 'Holy Living and Dying,' which I am sure will assist you to a devotional frame of mind. Do you think you will be able to attend the daily service during Lent?"

"I shall, whenever I can," replied Carrie. "My classes will not interfere with my attending, but I cannot answer for my health; although"—and she looked gratefully towards Agnes, who had drawn beside them, and was examining the library—"I think I may hope to improve under the care of such a watchful, kind nurse."

"Then I must prove less indulgent," said Agnes, promptly, "and not only disapprove, but forbid your venturing out on days like this."

"She will not stand in much fear of strict discipline after to-day, I imagine," said Mr. Bellamy, smiling. "I do not think you will succeed now in enforcing any restrictions whatever. Do you find any thing among my books, Miss Ryland, you would like to read? My collection is made up mostly of theological works—too much so, Mrs. Bellamy complains sometimes. You will find something in this corner, perhaps. I am somewhat doubtful of your success there." She was standing before the shelves filled with ecclesiastical history—the writings of the fathers, and staunch defenders of the Church.

"I think this must be the place to look for

what I would find," she replied, her face turning to deep carnation as she modestly added, "You spoke this morning of the 'living power' that has preserved the Truth from apostolic times until now, claiming your Church to be that preserver. Have you clear and direct proof to furnish me, in support of that assertion?"

When the words had escaped her lips, Agnes was a little frightened at her daring. She was fearful of having placed herself in an antagonistic position she was too weak to defend. She had not broached the subject for the sake of argument, but from a curiosity awakened by the sermon of that morning. Mr. Bellamy met her calmly—

"I have the most reliable and conclusive evidence to support that assertion, as well as Scriptural assurance of the fact. The chain of our Apostles or teachers reaches back, in unbroken succession, through a line of bishops, name after name, to the hands of the Apostles themselves—those holy men sent out by Christ, even as He was sent by the Father, with His promise to be with them always, even unto the end of the world—a promise that could be fulfilled only by His presence with their successors. We maintain the Episcopal form of government, which—having been the universal practice of the Church of Christ from its foundation, for more than *fifteen hundred years, without inter-*

ruption—shows Episcopacy to be of divine institution, and to have been regarded by the Church as of inviolable authority. In our creeds, we hold steadfastly to the doctrines of the Apostles, and our form of worship agrees with the customs of the primitive Church."

"Do you claim to be infallible? Has there been no engrafting of false doctrine upon your Church since apostolic times?"

"Not in the essentials of our faith—those doctrines necessary for salvation, which were settled by God's good providence, in apostolic times, by the one universal voice of the Church. Christ sadly foretold a time when iniquity should abound, charity become cold, and the faith be hard to find. He said, that as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot, so should it be when He came the second time to judge the earth. St. Paul also prophesied perilous times for the Church. It has been said, by one of our divines, that 'though there will be always grain on the threshing-floor, yet the chaff may sometimes hide it; though wheat will be ever in the field, yet it may sometimes be almost choked with tares.' No; we do not claim to be infallible, nor do we deny that in non-essentials we may somewhere be in error; yet the gates of hell cannot, and shall not prevail against the Pillar and Ground of the Truth."

The jingling of the bells, as Charlie drove up

to the door, interrupted them. Mr. Pellamy hastened to put on his hat and overcoat, and Agnes selected a few books from the library, —nothing theological, however.

"Do you think," she asked of him, with a half-mischievous smile, "that you can furnish me with proof of your Episcopal Church in apostolic times, or of one any farther back than the days of Henry VIII.?"

"Let me first ask a special favor of you," he returned, in the same pleasant humor, "before I furnish you with what you seem doubtful of ever receiving. I challenge you to produce one single Church, in all Europe, Africa, or Asia, which in the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, or even the sixth century, was for one moment Presbyterian. I refer you to your staunchest Presbyterian libraries—to your chief pillars, Baxter, Le Clerc, Bucer, Beza, Casaubon, Blondel, and particularly to Grotius, who was 'as familiar with antiquity, and with its monuments and fathers, as the child with his alphabet and toys.'"

"Very well," was the cheerful rejoinder, "you shall have the evidence. Do you consider the search entirely hopeless?"

"I will not discourage you. Your father and Dr. Ranney will assist you."

Little was said during their ride to the Seminary, their faces being too closely muffled to

allow of conversation. They were met by Mrs. Timmons in the hall, who made the most sincere apologies for forgetting to send for them according to her promise, giving as a reason the many interesting incidents that had absorbed her mind that day. The work of the Lord was wonderfully advancing in their midst; many, whom they had blindly supposed to be utterly hardened at heart, had been visited by His irresistible grace. Mrs. Timmons mentioned several worthless cases in the village, who had attended the meetings that day, and desired prayers; two or three more of her pupils had taken the same step, and she concluded with a depth of feeling that brought tears to her mild, motherly eyes—

“But the most blessed hope I am now permitted to cherish, is that of Ellen Butler’s conversion.”

Agnes started perceptibly, and quickly asked what assurance she had of such a thing.

“She not only attended the prayer-meeting last evening,” replied Mrs. Timmons, “but she went out to church this morning, which surely manifested an awakening interest, and to the prayer-meeting again this afternoon.”

“Have you had any conversation with her upon the subject?” asked Agnes, unable to dispel her belief that Mrs. Timmons was deceiving herself, notwithstanding Ellen Butler’s strange

conduct; “she would frankly avow her motive in going, no doubt.”

“I did attempt to converse with her on our way home, but she was sullen and reserved. I wish you would talk with her, Agnes, and discover the state of her mind, if possible, and reveal it to me.”

Agnes consented to talk with Ellen upon the subject, expressing little hope of success. Mrs. Timmons was more confident. They were leaving her, when she called them back, and requested them to come down to the parlor as soon as they could, as Prof. Cartzen and Dr. Ranney were there. She wished them also to urge Ellen Butler to accompany them.

Carrie begged hard to be excused, and was unwillingly released. The thought of a formal presentation to two such important personages, and that before the solemn ranks of half the school-girls, and all the teachers, was too frightful for her to entertain. Agnes, who had forgotten until that moment, that Dr. Ranney was to take tea at Barley Wood that evening, and chiefly for the opportunity of conversing with her, concealed her regret at the deprivation of a quiet evening with Carrie, and promised to come down immediately.

Hurrying through the halls, they shivered in expectation of finding their room cold, and the fire out, and Agnes regretted her thoughtless-

ness in not asking some of the young ladies to sit there during the day, a privilege most of them would have gladly accepted. Bidding Carrie to stop by the register until the room was warm, she opened the door, and instead of meeting a chilling atmosphere, found a cheerful fire blazing upon the grate, and Ellen Butler seated before it. Agnes was most agreeably surprised, and overwhelmed Ellen with thanks for her kindness and forethought in providing for their comfort.

"I knew you would come home almost frozen," she said, proceeding to assist the shivering Carrie in removing her bonnet and cloak. "That was my condition when I ran in here about an hour ago, and was really inclined to be angry with you for not being here, with a rousing fire to receive me."

"And this is your retaliation. When our teeth stop chattering we will try and praise you sufficiently."

"Oh, we have had such a happy day!" chimed in Carrie, "I wish you had been with us."

"You were just overjoyed because I happened to be here to make your fire."

"But we would much rather have had you with us. Do you know Mrs. Bellamy? Oh, you would like her so much!"

"Ah! you have spent the day in visiting. Really, my devoutness has exceeded yours."

"But we have been to church, and Aggie went to Sunday-school this afternoon. We took dinner and tea at the Rectory, and we are going there again this week. I wish you would go with us, Ellen—won't you? Oh, it has been such a happy day! I feel as if I must talk it all over before I can go to sleep."

"Well, talk it to me," said Ellen, dropping down upon the low seat beside her.

"But you are to go away, and so is Agnes, and I must sit up here alone all the evening, I suppose."

Ellen looked up inquiringly at Agnes.

"Mrs. Timmons has invited us down into the parlor; she particularly requests you to come. Prof. Cartzen and Dr. Ranney are here."

"Why does she request me particularly?" A cold smile played around Ellen's mouth.

"That you may become acquainted with Prof. Cartzen and Dr. Ranney, I suppose. Most of the young ladies are invited, particularly those that are interested in the revival." Agnes studied her closely.

"And I am already classified with that number?"

"Dr. Ranney observed your presence at church to-day, and is much interested in you."

Ellen laughed out, harshly.

"Are you going down, Aggie?"

"Yes, I must."

"Well, so will I—I will go down now, and make the interview as long as possible. Shall we see you before tea?"

Agnes said No, as there was no necessity of her going down until afterwards. She wished she could be excused altogether; but that was out of the question, on Dr. Ranney's account, and she never felt more averse to a conversation with him upon "the state of her soul," than at that moment.

Ellen abruptly left them, and instead of going directly to the parlor, they heard her ascend the stairs, and proceed to Mollie Raymond's room, which was over theirs. It was a strange circumstance—one they had never known to occur before.

"What a queer girl she is," said Carrie, musingly.

"I despair of ever understanding her," rejoined Agnes. "When I think I know her by heart, she resolves herself into new enigmas more inexplicable than the first. She puzzles me now exceedingly."

When Agnes entered the parlor, Prof. Cartzen was reading aloud a letter he had lately received from one of the Indian boys at the Mission, the son of a chief, possessing extraordinary faculties of mind, and whom he hoped to have educated for a missionary. The letter was exceedingly interesting, bestowing much praise

and affection upon the absent teacher, urging his return, and portraying the general state of things in the little settlement. The letter was short and listened to with breathless attention. It was then passed round the circle, to gratify the curiosity of those who wished to see the chirography of an Indian boy, sixteen years of age, who had learned his letters of Prof. Cartzen, not two years before, and who was, when found by him, a wretched, abject savage, smeared with war-paint, and adorned with the gaudy feathers of birds his unerring arrow had brought down. The letter was written in a cramped school-boy hand, with here and there a blot, and many instances of bad orthography. The young ladies were enthusiastic in their praise of its merits, and asked numberless questions regarding the wonderful youth. Mollie Raymond retained it long, reading it slowly through, from beginning to end, regardless of the impatience of those who were yet to examine it. She left a tear upon the almost illegible autograph. Ellen Butler, who sat near the Professor, was the last to obtain the precious script, and the examination it received under her sharp gray eyes was protracted and minute.

Refolding it carefully, she approached Professor Cartzen, with a quiet smile that robbed her face of its chilling severity, and composedly seated herself beside him. Agnes, who was ac-

counting to Dr. Ranney for her absence from church that day, was distracted by the movement into entire forgetfulness of what she was saying. Mrs. Timmons' care-worn face shot up a sudden joyous lustre; the young ladies were curious, and the Professor slightly embarrassed.

"I have a special favor to ask of you," she began, in a soft, unruffled tone. "Will you permit me to retain this letter? it would afford me the greatest pleasure."

A dozen mouths pouted with vexation at their forgetfulness to make the same request. Ellen Butler was envied for once.

"Certainly! certainly!" was the bland reply, his smooth, white hands gesticulating somewhat extravagantly. Ellen's lay like marble on her lap. He moved restlessly in his chair, his unquiet eyes pursuing a swift, aimless chase around the room. "Certainly, my dear young lady; I am grateful for your interest in the matter—truly so."

It was as impossible for Ellen to lavish thanks as praise, and she expended more upon this occasion than she had ever done upon any single one before in her life.

Agnes' interview with Dr. Ranney was necessarily brief, for which she was silently thankful. There were several of the young ladies "under conviction," with whom he must converse, and the time before the evening prayer-meeting.

which had been appointed at the Seminary, was short. He expressed a deep concern in her spiritual welfare, and the alarm her total absence from their meetings had given him. It was surely a Day of Decision as to who would stand upon the side of the Lord. He urged her to attend the prayer-meeting that evening, and shake off, if possible, the drowsy, dangerous slumber that was lulling her to destruction and death.

Agnes listened silently to his earnest exhortation. It afforded her neither comfort nor strength, although it could not add to the disquiet of her unsatisfied soul. He had warned her against slumber—how she longed for repose and peace.

CHAPTER IX.

MISSIONARY ZEAL.

THE first day of Lent had come, and Carrie welcomed it with a devotional spirit. She hoped to obtain Mrs. Timmons' consent to attend church that morning, and also the daily service during the Fast, which, conveniently for her, had been appointed at four in the afternoon. There would be lectures on Wednesday and Friday evenings, but she could not anticipate attending them, as she had no one to accompany her. She trusted fully to improve the sweet and hallowed season, gaining as much profit as possible by a more faithful observance of private devotion, and by frequenting the house of the Lord as often as she could.

Softly and quietly dawned the first day of the solemn Fast upon that throng of young, happy hearts, only one of which was aware of its presence, and heard the warning voice calling unto the children of men to turn unto the Lord "with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." Agnes had known, from something Carrie had said, that Lent was approaching, but she had given the subject no further thought or interest.

Her views regarding the season were those entertained by the majority of minds dissenting from the customs of the Church. She knew that Lent was a great Fast observed by Episcopalians and Romanists, and most rigidly by the latter. The Church of England had borrowed the observance from her corrupt mother. It was one of the formal robes with which she clad her dead body, to feign, if possible, an appearance of life. Why fast forty days in succession because the Church commanded such penance? She had not expressed these sentiments to Carrie—she would not have done so; besides, she had almost resolved to avoid conversations upon religious subjects altogether, with any one, as the surest way of freeing herself from perplexity and doubt. What profiteth it? We must see through a glass darkly until, to our immortal eyes, the mystery is revealed.

When Agnes awoke that Wednesday morning, she was surprised to find that Carrie had already arisen, and was sitting by the fire, dressed in her brown merino, an unmistakable indication of her intention to go out that day, and reading one of the books she had brought from Mr. Bellamy's. It was early—the clamorous bell had not yet awakened the drowsy slumberers, to whom it was the most unwelcome sound their days afforded.

"You are up early this morning, Carrie," said

Agnes, leaving her pillow. "I wish you had awakened me, for I have a long translation to make before school. What could have called you out so early?"

"It is Ash Wednesday, you know."

"No, I did not know," replied Agnes, with a frank smile. "That is the first day in Lent, is it not? But why do you call it Ash Wednesday? You have some ancient reason, I suppose."

"Most certainly we have," said Carrie, her face lighting up with the information she was able to give. "In the early Church, penitents used to express, at this time, their humiliation, by lying in sackcloth and ashes. By putting ashes, and sometimes earth, upon their heads, they made themselves lower than the lowest of the creatures of God, and put themselves in mind of their mortality, which would reduce them to dust and ashes."

"And therein you deviate from the practice of the early Church, I see, for which you express such reverence. As you claim to conform to their example, why is it that your members do not put dust and ashes on their heads to-day?"

"There were many voluntary and local customs in the primitive Church which have not been retained. We profess only to have retained the more general and important features of the

early discipline and practice, but it is interesting to find some traces of the others still remaining."

"I believe," said Agnes, after hesitating whether to continue the conversation or not, so averse was she to holding any thing like a controversy with Carrie, "that fasting is recommended to the Christian by command, example, encouragement, and results; but the setting apart of forty successive days for that purpose, at a stated season of the year, seems too much like a mere observance of times and seasons, in conformity to the rules of the Church, rather than the promptings of the spirit."

"I will try and tell you, as well as I can," said Carrie, "why the Church fixed upon forty days for its great yearly fast. I was just reading on the subject, in a book Mr. Bellamy lent me, and learn that the number of forty days was fixed in imitation of Moses and Elias, in the Old Testament, but principally in imitation of our Saviour's fast, in the New Testament, 'That,' as St. Augustine says, 'we might, as far as we are able, conform to Christ's practice, and suffer with him here, that we may reign with him hereafter.'"

"But," said Agnes, "how can we imitate the miraculous fast of our Saviour? He abstained from food forty days, which is beyond human endurance."

"Your question makes me think of what George Herbert says :

" 'It's true we cannot reach Christ's fortieth day ;
Yet to go part of that religious way
Is better than to rest.
We cannot reach our Saviour's purity,
Yet we are bid be holy *even as he*.
In both let's do our best.

" 'Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with him than one
That travelleth by-ways ;
Perhaps my God, though He be far before,
May turn and take me by the hand, and more,
May strengthen my decays.' "

"There is truth and beauty in that," said Agnes, thoughtfully. "My objection, carried farther, might lead me to refuse following His example in many things, because I cannot attain the wonderful works he did."

"May I read you a single extract from Bishop Horne?" asked Carrie. "It tells us why the Church fixed upon a stated time for this fast, much more clearly than I can express it."

"Read it, by all means. I shall be pleased to listen." Carrie read :

"It was wisely foreseen, that, should the sinner be permitted to reserve to himself the choice of a 'convenient season' wherein to turn from sin to righteousness, that 'convenient season' would never come; and the specious plea of keeping every day holy alike would often be

found to cover a design of keeping none holy at all. It seemed good, therefore, to the Church to fix a stated time in which men might enter upon the great work of their repentance. And what time could have been selected with greater propriety than the 'Lenten' or spring season, when universal nature, awakening from her wintry sleep, and coming out of a state of deformity, and a course of penance, imposed for the transgression of man, her Lord and Master is about to rise from the dead; and putting on her garments of glory and beauty, to give us a kind of prelude to the renovation of all things? So that the whole creation most harmoniously accompanieth the voice of the Church, as that sweetly accordeth to the call of the Apostle: 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' "

"You must know, Carrie, dear," said Agnes, after a thoughtful silence, "that it is difficult for me to disencumber myself of my prejudices against the Episcopal Church. They were early instilled into my mind, and my education has been calculated to foster them. But I find I must judge you with less dependence upon my prejudices."

"I wish you would," was the earnest reply.

After breakfast Carrie devoted herself to her studies, scarcely lifting her eyes from her book and slate until the ringing of the bell which

warned them that there was but a half hour before the time of their assembling in the school-room. She must go then, and request Mrs. Timmons to excuse her that morning. She dreaded the interview, and moved restlessly about the room in striving to prepare herself for it. Agnes could not help observing that something was wrong.

"What is it, child, that troubles you?"

"My having to go and ask Mrs. Timmons to excuse me this morning."

"Fie, now, Carrie! what a cowardly little thing you are! She will let you go, I am sure. She may torment you awhile before consenting; but that you must bear heroically."

"How will she torment me?" asked Carrie. She knew well enough, but could not help asking.

"Oh, by troublesome questions, perhaps, about your Church, and your faith in its doctrines and customs. But that does not intimidate you, I hope."

"I wish you would go for me, Aggie. I wouldn't care for Mrs. Timmons, but Miss Lacy will be with her now, you know."

"And that would be a terrible inquisition for you, I see. Yes; I will go and ask her."

"Oh, thank you, Aggie; thank you. I know it is silly, but there is nothing that makes me so uncomfortable as those snapping little eyes of

Miss Lacy's, when she looks right through me. They fall on Ellen Butler and you, as if you were made of stone."

A sudden rap at the door, and Mollie Raymond burst in, her cheeks aglow, and eyes sparkling with excitement. Since the day of her sudden "conversion," she had maintained a wonderful degree of enthusiasm, that had not failed her for a single moment. She neglected her books and classes; attended all the meetings that were held, regardless of her health or the weather; appointed prayer-meetings in the Seminary, and took a conspicuous part in them; conversed and prayed with the impenitent, and gave no attention to any thing that could not be associated with the subject absorbing her. Ellen Butler had curtly remarked that Mollie's mind, in its present condition, was like a bow long over-strained—most likely to snap, and drop the arrow. She had a paper and pencil in her hand—

"Oh, Miss Ryland!" she exclaimed, as soon as she had crossed the threshold—seating herself upon the neatly-made bed, instead of the chair Agnes had hastened to present—"I am sure you are going to help us! It lies in your power to aid us so much."

Agnes looked interested and inquisitive, and the corners of her mouth twitched a little when Mollie continued—

"We are going to try to do something for Prof. Cartzen's mission, in the way of making up a box of clothing for some of those poor converted Indians. He says they are deplorably destitute, and if he furnishes them with material for suitable garments, they have not the skill to make it up properly, and their clothing would last them twice as long if made by wise and experienced hands. We propose furnishing him with three dozen well-made shirts, and as many articles of woman's wear as we can get ready, or contribute from our wardrobes. Now will you and Miss Seabury undertake to make one of the shirts, at least? It is but plain, simple work, you know;" and she held her pencil over the paper, waiting for another entry.

"How long before Prof. Cartzen leaves us?" inquired Agnes.

"It is uncertain, very uncertain"—and Mollie could not help blushing, and dropping her eyes, at this revelation of her acquaintance with his affairs. "He says he cannot avoid a detention of a week longer, at the least. We will have time enough to prepare the things, if we are as industrious as our zeal should make us."

"Oh yes, there will be time enough," said Agnes, "and I commend your undertaking. What do you say, Carrie, to making one of the shirts? Have you time and inclination to do so?"

"I will be glad to do all I can. Where is Prof. Cartzen's mission?"

"If you had attended our meetings, you would have heard much about it to interest you," replied Mollie, with a rebuking smile. "His mission is somewhere in Nebraska, removed from any English settlement. He is surrounded by Indians and Germans. It is a wonderful instance of self-sacrifice and Christian zeal, considering his wealth and talents."

"We need more of such men in our missionary cause," said Agnes; "men who gladly take up the cross, rather than receive it as a heavy duty, which they will submissively perform for Christ's sake."

"Prof. Cartzen is a true Christian hero," said Mollie, with enthusiasm. "I never saw a more perfect one. He has every attribute necessary for a soldier who must stand in the foremost of the fight—'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'"

"How long has he been a missionary?" asked Carrie, whose heart warmed towards the self-sacrificing laborer.

"For several years. He resigned an honorable professorship in one of the eastern colleges, to enter upon this arduous field, where, I fear, he will yet fall a martyr." Mollie sighed.

"Is he breaking down under his labor?" asked

Agnes. "I thought he was looking very hearty and robust."

"He says he has recruited wonderfully during his absence. When he left the mission he was in miserable health, brought on by exposure and over-exertion. But he says it is not his labor that wears most heavily upon him, but the loneliness—his want of congenial associates to enliven his log-cabin, there in the wilderness."

"He will have to get him a wife," said Agnes, half sportively. Mollie turned scarlet, and twisted her paper nervously.

"His lot has few attractions to any, save one who is willing to dedicate herself wholly to the service of the Lord."

"If I loved him," broke in Carrie, with her usual warmth, "I could follow him to a cave in the Rocky Mountains, and that without any Christian principle in the matter; and so could any whole-souled woman."

Mollie was a little startled; Agnes much amused.

"And you think it would not require any self-sacrifice for a woman to go back with him, to his mission-hut, as his wife?" propounded Mollie, gravely.

"Self-sacrifice? No! not a whit of it, if she loved him as she ought to, and certainly not if she had a Christian interest in the mission."

"It is something to leave one's home and friends, I think," said Mollie, pathetically.

"But more to lose the Professor and the log-hut," replied Carrie, laughing; and Agnes began to suspect her of attempting to tease Mollie. "If a woman's love is satisfied, I don't think she can have much left to make her miserable. Perhaps I am talking of something I know nothing about, but this I do believe, Mollie Raymond,—that if you, or any woman like you, was deep in love with Prof. Cartzen, and you knew that love was returned, the prospect of the log-shanty, and naught but the society of Indians and Germans, would not prevent your marrying him, and there would be little 'Christian self-sacrifice' in the matter."

Mollie was slightly piqued, but bore up patiently. Carrie was ignorant of the true state of affairs, or she would not have spoken as she did. Agnes was sorry to have her entertainment interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Timmons, followed by Miss Lacy.

"And have you lent your encouragement to Miss Raymond's benevolent enterprise?" pleasantly inquired Mrs. Timmons, who had been calling upon the young ladies to stimulate them in the object.

"Oh, yes," replied Agnes, "Carrie and I are ready to do all we can. My time is mostly oc-

cupied now, you know, but I will improve my leisure in Professor Cartzen's behalf."

"Will Miss Seabury sew during Lent?" inquired Miss Lacy.

"There is no reason why I may not?" replied Carrie, "if I can spare the time."

"You have but few recitations," continued Miss Lacy; "not enough to absorb you wholly."

Carrie did not wish to prolong the unpleasant conversation, and gave her attention to what was passing between Mrs. Timmons, Agnes, and Mollie.

"Have you asked Ellen Butler to assist you?"

"Yes; and she has promised us the devotion of her knitting-needles up to the very day of Professor Cartzen's departure. She will finish a pair of socks, at least."

"There is certainly a great change in Ellen Butler," thereupon remarked Mrs. Timmons.

"She was always ready to assist a benevolent object," interposed Agnes.

"But not with the spirit which she enlists in this," said Mrs. Timmons. "There is certainly a remarkable change in her."

Mollie, having made an entry of what Agnes and Carrie promised to do, hurried out. Mrs. Timmons and Miss Lacy were also withdrawing, when Carrie found courage to make known her request.

"You wish to be absent all the morning,"

said Mrs. Timmons, thoughtfully. "I am sorry to have you lose your history and grammar. It is a very unusual request for you to make, Miss Seabury. You have never improved any of the many opportunities given to the young ladies for attending divine worship. Do you not think it would be as acceptable in the sight of God, to attend to your studies this morning, and meet with us in the library for prayer this evening? We are to have an exhortation from Dr. Ranney."

"No, Mrs. Timmons, it would not be as acceptable in the sight of God," replied Carrie, promptly. "This day has been appointed by the Church for our strict observance, and we are bidden to assemble together."

"But, my dear, does the Bible, which must be our guide in all things, command the observance of this particular day, in a particular manner?"

"The Bible recommends us to fast, and the Church, to insure our compliance, fixed upon a stated time for special humiliation and prayer."

"And you submit to the commands of your Church, rather than the promptings of the Spirit in such matters?" broke in Miss Lacy.

"We welcome the season," replied Carrie, with a composure remarkable for her under the trying circumstances, "and are grateful for the benefits we may derive from it. I do not know

why the Spirit would not aid us in keeping a fast appointed by the universal Church, as well as one fixed upon by any single congregation or individual."

The school-bell rang, compelling Mrs. Timmons to be brief.

"I am sorry to see in you the exclusive spirit of your Church, my dear Miss Seabury. I wish you would examine yourself, and see if it is not merely a sectarianism that has kept you from our meetings this winter. Yes, you may go to church to-day, and I pray you may be benefited."

"You wish also to attend the daily service for some six weeks to come, I suppose," said Miss Lacy; adding, with a significant smile at Mrs. Timmons, "Sally and Bridget made the same request this morning."

"The daily service?" and Mrs. Timmons raised her hands in surprise. "You surely do not propose the continuance of this interference with your studies. It is impossible for me to admit of such a thing without the consent of your guardian."

"Oh, it will not interfere with my studies after to-day," said Carrie. "The service is appointed at four in the afternoon, and I have no recitations at that hour, you know."

"If you have so much leisure, what is to prevent your taking up another study?" interposed Miss Lacy. "We shall form a class in Ancient

History this week, which I deem it most advisable for you to enter."

Singularly this suggestion fell unheeded by Mrs. Timmons, who finally gave her reluctant consent to Carrie's request. As soon as they were gone she burst into tears.

"Oh, Aggie! how provoking Miss Lacy can be! I believe she tries to make me feel wicked. As Ellen Butler says, 'She has the most Christian way of saying ugly things, of any one I ever knew.' I wish she would never speak to me again, indeed I do."

"Well, don't cry about it, Carrie; she is very tantalizing, I know. I am sorry to have you lose the happy face you have worn all the morning."

"I am more sorry to lose my temper as I did; I felt like saying such bitter things to her once or twice, and it was all I could do to keep them back. I do hope this will be gone before I get home;" and wiping her eyes, she went to the wardrobe for her bonnet and shawl.

"Why do you go so early?" asked Agnes. "There is yet a half hour to the time."

"I want to sit there alone in the church awhile, before the service begins," was the low, tremulous reply. "I must get this load off my heart before I can worship God as I would."

"I am going to the village to-day, at noon, about the time your church will be out," said

Agnes. "I will wait for you at Mrs. Leson's, and we will walk home together."

"Oh, that will be delightful!" The promise made Carrie's face a shade happier, yet Agnes heard her sigh, as she took up her little Prayer-book and hastened away.

CHAPTER X.

A PERPLEXING LETTER.

THE bell above Mrs. Leson's shop-door had but just proclaimed Agnes' entrance, causing the bustling little milliner to start up suddenly from her work, behind the counter, smiling as affably as her care-worn features would allow—when it sharply announced another visitor, which, to Agnes' surprise, was Carrie herself.

"You are much earlier than I thought you would be," said Agnes, instantly arising from her seat beside Mrs. Leson's cheerful fire, and replacing, in its envelope, a letter she had just opened to read. "I thought I should have more than time enough to read this before you came in. It is from father, and contains my answer for Mr. Bellamy, no doubt."

"Read it, Aggie, before we go," said Carrie, who had looked for that letter with anxious curiosity; "I am willing to wait."

"You are impatient to know his answer, I see. Well, you shall when we get home; I would rather read it there: you know my dislike to reading letters hastily."

They were leaving the shop, when Agnes' eye

fell upon the disappointed face of Mrs. Leson, who had stood patiently behind the counter, hoping they would purchase something, the winter was so hard, and trade so dull.

"Wait a moment, Carrie, and let us look at Mrs. Leson's head-dresses," said Agnes, pausing before the scantily furnished show-case. "I have heard she has some very pretty ones."

Mrs. Leson's face brightened in a moment, and she fluttered from behind the counter, nervously adjusting her cap, hair, and spectacles, and breaking out with a loquacity of which she was capable.

"I have some pretty ones, Miss Ryland, very pretty and very fashionable; but if I have none made up that please you, I can soon make one according to your orders. Here is a lovely one—red and black is so stylish, you know—you may have it cheap, very cheap—or this one of dark-blue velvet, so becoming to a person of your complexion. Is it not exquisite?" and she held it up for their admiration.

"It is very pretty, indeed," said Agnes, whose taste in such matters was the criterion of her friends.

"Of course it is the prettiest thing you can find—I made it for a lady, here in the village, who brought the pattern from New York; but the very day she ordered it to be finished she turned religious, and thought it wicked to wear

any thing of the kind, or even to pay me for my trouble, I suppose. I have one or two more that have been left on my hands in the same way. Miss Raymond ordered that scarlet one with bugles, and a world of pains I took with it too, for she was one of my best customers; but I have not had a glimpse of her since she was 'converted' as they call it. Well"—and Mrs. Leson sighed heavily and knit her brows, looking sharply out of the corners of her eyes at Agnes, as she added: "A missionary's wife will care little for such finery, unless she should choose to dance with the Indians, which I think will prove more to Mollie's taste than preaching and praying."

This was the first they had heard of the gossip that was in everybody's mouth. It struck them unpleasantly, and both were silent upon the subject. Agnes regretted that her own secret suspicions were harbored by any one, and above all, that they had been made the foundation of such a mischievous rumor. She turned the subject by asking Carrie's opinion of the pretty blue head-dress.

"Oh, I like it very much; it is altogether the prettiest one I have seen."

"Then I will take it," said Agnes. Carrie blushed at this deference to her choice, unsuspecting that the purchase was made for her.

"What a strange woman she is," was Carrie's first remark when they were out in the street.

"She is a kind-hearted creature," said Agnes, "and means no harm to any one; but her tongue makes her dangerous. It is well to be cautious what we say before her, or our names will be woven into half the village scandal."

"What did she mean about Mollie Raymond, I wonder? Do you think she is going to marry Prof. Cartzen?"

"Their acquaintance has been too short for us reasonably to suppose the matter decided," replied Agnes. "Prof. Cartzen has certainly been very attentive to her. I am sorry such a rumor has got abroad, for it rests only on idle suspicion."

"I believe there is something in it," said Carrie, seriously; "for now, when I think of it, how strangely she talked to me this morning, and how she blushed when she spoke of him—but I did not dream of such a thing at the time."

"I thought you very unsuspicious," said Agnes, laughing, "you must be guarded in your protestations of faithfulness, or Mollie will be jealous of you. But, Carrie"—and her voice suddenly changed—"if Mollie is in love with Prof. Cartzen, I consider it most lamentable."

"Surely not, if the affection is mutual?"

"Yes, even then, for Mollie's father, who acknowledges no God but Mammon, and worships

naught but it and his only child, would sooner see her in her grave, than the wife of a missionary like Prof. Cartzen, or of any one that would dethrone her from her position in society."

"Then I am sorry for Mollie, if she loves him."

"If she does," continued Agnes, "it is with no common passion, her nature is so intense. Nothing would thwart her, or any thing be too dear for her to forswear. If her love is not returned, it will be a terrible experience for her—one not breaking her heart, but turning it to stone."

"But not if she is a Christian, Aggie."

"No, not if she has truly cast herself at the foot of the Cross. Such a trial would be a severe test of her conversion. I am afraid for her, Carrie, but God forbid that I judge the sincerity of her profession."

"What a whirl of excitement she is constantly in. I don't believe she has had an hour of quiet since she took the first step. Such a religion would distract me—I should never hear 'the still, small voice.'"

They walked on some distance in silence—then Agnes was the first to speak.

"I hope Mollie has not mistaken an ardent interest in Prof. Cartzen, for a religious zeal. I think, as you told her this morning, it would require little self-sacrifice, or Christian heroism,

for her to follow him wheresoever he would, if she loved him; although I concluded from what she said, that should she take such a step, she would acknowledge no stronger motive than a desire to aid in the promotion of the Gospel."

"I hope, if there is to be a reaction in her case, it will occur before she finds herself in his log-cabin," said Carrie, earnestly. "But here they come! No wonder people talk as they do."

Prof. Cartzen and Mollie were slowly approaching them, looking very much like absorbed lovers. Bending down to her glowing face, he was talking low and earnestly of something that made her oblivious to every thing else—the friends she met, the staring groups in the windows, or the distance they went. Agnes and Carrie were passed unobserved by both the Professor and Mollie; and when Carrie, with pardonable curiosity, looked after them, they had gone by the post-office without stopping; a strange thing for any of the Barley Wood girls to do.

"I think we have something now besides suspicion to build our conjectures upon," said Carrie, who had been amused by the complete abstraction of the pair. "We can't wonder at Mrs. Leson's speculations on the subject hereafter. Do you think Mrs. Timmons is aware of it, and approves of it all?"

"She certainly is not blind," replied Agnes, most seriously, "and she has the highest regard for Professor Cartzen; yet I cannot think she would encourage Mollie in receiving his attentions, or even suffer her to do so, in opposition to, or ignorance of, her father's wishes. But Ellen Butler puzzles me most of all. How strange her conduct is of late. I cannot understand her intimacy with Mollie Raymond."

"I never expect to understand any thing she does," said Carrie. "She makes me think of an old riddle-book I used to have when a little girl. The answers were torn off, and I could not sleep for trying to guess them out sometimes. They say Ellen goes to all their meetings now, although she never takes a part in them. I should think Mrs. Timmons would get discouraged in waiting for the 'revelation' she confidently expects. I think Mollie wonders at Ellen's sudden interest in her as much as we do."

"No doubt she does, for her former treatment of Ellen has been really unkind, although prompted only by a love of sport, for which Ellen was a dangerous subject. Ellen always had a strange interest in Mollie; she concealed it from her most perfectly, but there was not a girl in the school possessing more of her regard."

"And what causes her to manifest it now? To think of her knitting for the mission! I can hardly believe it."

"Her asking Prof. Cartzen for the Indian boy's letter seems equally incredible."

"She has furnished several of the young ladies with duplicates of that letter, almost perfect fac-similes. The paper is the same, bearing the same manufacturer's stamp; and she has written upon each of the copies that any quantity of it can be obtained at Reade's, exactly corresponding with that used at Prof. Cartzen's Mission, recommending the young ladies to the use of the same."

"What can she mean? There is a meaning attached to every thing she says and does."

They thought it strange that Ellen should be waiting for them in the Seminary hall. She had not commissioned them with a single errand, and, like Carrie Seabury, she never expected any one to bring a letter from the office for her.

"Did you see Mollie Raymond anywhere?" she inquired, meeting them upon the threshold.

Agnes told her when and where they met her, but made no allusion to the company she had; but Ellen was not satisfied.

"You met her a few moments ago, you say. Was there any one with her?"

"Yes, Prof. Cartzen was with her," replied Agnes, marking Ellen's ill-concealed vexation.

"Did she tell you where she was going?"

"She did not see us," replied Agnes, laughing. "The Professor had talked her blind."

Ellen was pale and excited. She walked uneasily to the window and looked out, put her hand upon the door-knob—then, as if suddenly changing her intention, turned about and quickly ascended the stairs.

"What is it, Ellen? What troubles you?" asked Agnes, following her.

Her words recalled Ellen to herself, and mortified by the betrayal of her feelings, with wonderful tact she instantly reassumed her cold, outward composure.

"What am I troubled about?" she asked, smiling with well-feigned surprise at the inquiry. "Nothing very serious at present; but I can't bear standing here in the cold much longer. I wonder Mrs. Timmons allows this neglect of the fires."

"Won't you come in and sit with us until dinner-time?" asked Agnes, when they reached her room. Ellen gave a half-surlly refusal and hurried up to her own apartment.

"Is she angry with us?" inquired Carrie, indignant at the disrespectful treatment of Agnes' kindness.

"Oh no; that is only her way. She cannot deceive me, though; she is greatly troubled about something, I am sure."

"I tell you what I believe it is," said Carrie, in a half-whisper, glancing around the room lest any one should overhear her simple conjecture,

"I believe Ellen Butler is in love with Prof. Cartzen too."

Agnes laughed outright, annihilating the supposition in Carrie's mind instantly and completely.

"Oh, silly Carrie!" and she sportively pinched her scarlet cheeks. "I can believe now you know nothing of Ellen Butler."

"But she turned so pale when we told her Mollie was with him."

"But it was not from jealousy, you may be sure. What a tragedy you might have conjured up on that supposition—such remarkable heroines—and such a hero! But now for my letter; you had forgotten all about it, I see." Having laid aside their things, they sat down to read it, Agnes prefacing its contents by saying, as she drew it from the envelope:

"Now prepare yourself, Carrie, for multiplied instances of churches in the 'first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth centuries,' that were thoroughly Presbyterian, and I will not promise you any in the early apostolic times that were genuinely Episcopal."

Perhaps Carrie was glad, for a moment, that the dinner-bell rang, deferring Agnes' triumph. To be late at table was a serious misdemeanor, so the letter was at once laid aside.

It was not until they were seated at their evening's work that Carrie had an opportunity

to speak of the letter again, and then she was unwilling, for Agnes was unusually silent and sad, and the only cause that Carrie could assign for her dejection was the supposition that her father's letter had contained unwelcome tidings.

Mollie Raymond had been in and given them their missionary sewing. Her conduct and appearance were strange. She was pale and absent-minded, gazing vacantly into their faces when questioned regarding the work, and giving them brief and unsatisfactory replies. Her hands were tremulous and icy-cold, upon which Agnes remarked when they accidentally came in contact with hers, and asked if she was feeling well. Mollie assured her she was, and seemed slightly annoyed by the inquiry. For more than a half hour they worked in silence, Agnes scarcely raising her sad eyes from her sewing, and Carrie continually making mistakes in hers. More than once she laid down her needle, impelled to ask Agnes to tell her, if she could, what was troubling her so deeply, but not until she saw tears falling from beneath her drooping eyelids had she the courage to offer her sympathy unasked. Throwing her arms around Agnes' neck, she kissed her tenderly, and said she was sorry, very sorry for her, which was all the poor child could say.

"I do not know what to think of father's let-

ter," said Agnes, trying to restrain her tears. "I cannot understand it."

"Did it contain bad news?"

"None, whatever. It could contain nothing to grieve me like his severe reprimand. I cannot recall any thing I wrote meriting such a reply."

"Did he satisfy you regarding Mr. Bellamy's question?" asked Carrie, after a long pause, in which she studied how to make the inquiry, if at all.

"It is upon that very subject his letter pains me. In some way my request for information has made a wrong impression. I but briefly named the subject, and if I recollect rightly, in these words: 'What was the government of the early apostolic Church? Was it *bona fide* Presbyterian? If you have not time to answer me fully, please direct me to reliable authority.'"

"And what answer does he give you?" eagerly asked Carrie; then crimsoning, she added, "I hope I am not too curious. I do not ask to know what he said to grieve you—but—but—"

"If Mr. Bellamy is in the right, or not," said Agnes, with a pleasant smile, dispelling Carrie's confusion. "I will read you the letter, Carrie, at least that part of it. Father never wrote to me in such a tone before; it is inexplicable."

The mystery would have been solved, had Agnes known that the very day,—the Monday after her attendance at St. Paul's,—when she

despatched her last letter to her father, Miss Lacy, prompted by a deep concern in Miss Ryland's spiritual condition, and alarmed at the threatening aspect of things, had also despatched to the reverend gentleman several closely-written pages, descanting liberally on his daughter's conduct, depicting the painful anxiety which harassed the mind of Mrs. Timmons and herself, on account of her total lack of interest in the religious movement among them, her opposition to it, her avowed disbelief in its efficacy, and her inclination to infidel, or strongly heterodox sentiments, which the writer thought had been awakened and encouraged by the companions she had chosen. She also felt it to be her duty to inform him that his daughter's most intimate friend was a person whose scoffing at Christianity excluded her from the companionship of every one but Miss Ryland; and that the young lady—or child, for in scholarship she was but a child—whom Agnes had recently insisted upon having for a room-mate, was an Episcopalian, the only one in the school, and as rigid an observer of the fasts, holy days, and ceremonies of her church, as any Romanist could be, and quite as exclusive, having kept herself apart from their prayer-meetings, preferring to read her Prayer-book alone to assembling with them for public worship. She was confident that Miss Seabury was secretly exerting a pow-

erful influence upon the superior mind of Agnes, detrimental to her religious interests. Nor did she forget to mention that Agnes had attended service at St. Paul's the day previous, notwithstanding the weather had been cold and stormy, her visit to the Rectory, nor that Mr. Bellamy had accompanied them home. She could not, however, omit to convey to him the substance of a rumor which had reached her;—merely a rumor, it was true; nevertheless it *was* rumored that Mr. Bellamy had furnished Miss Ryland with religious reading, and that it was her intention to investigate the claims of a Church in whose liturgy she had found much to admire and reverence.

Ah! that was a deep thrust into an old wound, to the white-headed man, who, in the deepening shades of evening, paced his library floor for more than an hour, after reading Miss Lacy's letter, and before breaking the seal of the one from Agnes, which lay upon his table. All his ministerial life had been spent in fearlessly battling with the heresy which was threatening to creep, at last, upon his very hearthstone. Strange as it may appear, he was not terrified by the serpent-head of infidelity which had been represented to him, as raised in attack upon his child; but it was the reappearance of his old enemy upon the battle-field that caused the scarred champion to look to the

burnishing of his armor. His child betraying a tendency towards the Episcopal Church, that eldest daughter of the Mother of Harlots, against whose arrogant pretensions he had written and preached unanswerable arguments! His child, encircled within the fold, whence he had rescued her mother, after a struggle threatening to shatter forever her peace and his own! His child, his Agnes, betraying such weakness and such folly! It was intolerable. Should the suspicion prove well founded, she must certainly be removed from those baleful influences. He could soon eradicate every germ of so flagrant an error, when she was again brought to listen to his teaching. Had it not been the subject of his study and labor for years? Had not Prelacy staggered beneath his herculean blows, and had he not rejoiced in his hard-earned victory?

Walking restlessly up and down the room, his arms rigidly folded, his head bowed upon his breast, he cast severe glances at Agnes' letter, as often as he approached the table, pausing, and then turning away, without courage to open and read its contents. He feared a confirmation of his worst suspicions; believing that Miss Lacy would, from a kind consideration of his feelings, be inclined to soften rather than deepen the aspect of circumstances. The avowal Agnes had made in several of her recent letters of having no inclination to co-operate with the reli-

gious awakening in the place, and that from principle, and not from coldness, had grieved, but had not startled him until that moment. Was not the Episcopal Church opposed to the system of revivals?

Lighting his study lamp, he sat down, glancing again at Miss Lacy's open letter, before slowly breaking the seal of his daughter's; preparing himself with a stern, calculating expression to learn its import. It was short, one of the hastily despatched little messengers which the affectionate daughter sent to that lonely library whenever a leisure moment broke the weary routine of study. It breathed a longing for home, and an affectionate desire for the companionship of her father, which touched his heart like the warm kisses and embraces of her childhood, and he was banishing the hateful conjecture which had led him to think so unfavorably of her, when the last brief paragraph came like a thunder-bolt upon the momentary calm.

Did not her inquiry reveal a doubt of the apostolic foundation of Presbyterianism? And what had led her to that doubt but some recent acquaintance with the arrogant assertions of Episcopacy? Had she not been examining the subject studiously? or how otherwise could she have chosen to attack him, on the most assailable point—the discovery of which was doubtless affording her a secret triumph?

Dr. Ryland took no time for deliberating his reply, but, seizing his pen nervously, wrote as his fiery impulse dictated. No wonder that Agnes was grieved and perplexed. What had she said about Episcopacy? What expression had she dropped calculated to lead him to conclude that she was "swerving so widely from the faith of her fathers—led away by a glittering bauble—a sound of fair words and outside show, pleasing to the imagination, but deadly to the spiritual life?" She had merely asked what was the government of the early Church—if it was *bona fide Presbyterian*? and had been answered, not by the proof she had confidently expected, but by a direct and bitter assault upon Episcopacy, prefaced by warnings and exhortations completely mystifying her, so uncalled-for was their severity.

Taking no heed of the inquiry Agnes had innocently made, without a thought of arraying herself in opposition to his faith, he laid down, and amply underscored the four impregnable heads of his anti-prelacy position.

I. Episcopacy is, in its structure, anti-republican, and in its spirit hostile to human liberty.

II. It is now conceded by all the most *learned* and pious Episcopalians throughout the world, that Bishop and Presbyter are terms of the same meaning in the New Testament; that Bishops are called Presbyters, and Presbyters are de-

nominated Bishops, and the setting of Bishops over Presbyters is, therefore, an usurpation and an anti-Christ.

III. The Apostles were but twelve, and their number was no more intended to be increased than that of the twelve tribes, or the twelve constellations. The Apostles saw the Lord, whom their pretended successors have not seen; the Apostles wrought miracles, which their pretended successors cannot show; the Apostles possessed, individually, the gift of inspiration, which their pretended successors, unless indirectly or collectively, do not even claim; therefore, their pretended successors are *Apostati*, non *Apostoli*; *Seductores*, non *Doctores*; *Pilati*, non *Prelati*: not Apostles, but apostates; not doctors, but seductors; not prelates, but Pilates!

IV. Hilary declares that "in Egypt, even at this day" (say the end of the fourth century), "the Presbyters ordain in the Bishop's absence;" and Jerome, a writer of unbounded learning, declares that Episcopacy was introduced "by degrees" into the Church; that at Alexandria, even in his day, "not only election, but the ordination of the Bishops, was by the Presbyters themselves;" and demands, exultingly, of the proud Bishop of Rome, "What *does* a Bishop, ordination excepted, that a Presbyter may not do?" in other words, "what prerogative has a

Bishop, ordination excepted, that a Presbyter has not?"

Agnes dropped the letter with an air of dissatisfaction, and sank back in her chair dejectedly, while Carrie's face expressed great perplexity.

"What a strange letter," said Carrie, resuming the work, which had been entirely neglected during the reading of the *four* impregnable anti-prelacy heads; "he does not answer your question at all. What could make him think that you had aught to do with the Episcopal Church?"

"I cannot imagine, nor can I satisfy myself, by what means he has obtained impressions so erroneous. I did not even inform him of my having attended church with you last Sunday, nor mention my acquaintance with Mr. Belamy. I must, however, have said something to awaken his suspicion—something which I have now forgotten. He is easily aroused on that subject; it has been his battle-cry for many years. There are few divines in the Presbyterian ranks of our own country who have written and preached more than he against Episcopacy."

"I am sorry," said Carrie, artlessly.

"We are commanded, you know, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," replied Agnes, secretly amused, and wishing to draw out her little friend still further.

Carrie stitched on silently for a while, trying to clothe the sentiment she wished to express in kindness and charity.

"And we are also taught," she said, at last, "that he shall be accursed who preaches any other doctrine than that once delivered to the saints. It is enough to make us very sad to think of all the different doctrines which are preached in the world."

"Oh, for the one Church and one Shepherd!" sighed Agnes; "such a din of voices are crying, 'Lo here is Christ, and lo there!' What are we to believe?" She took up her work, inclined to think it were better to leave the poor Indians to their false worship than bring them into the feuds of Christendom, where men set up for themselves idols of doctrine and self-invented theories.

"What will you tell Mr. Bellamy?" asked Carrie.

"Oh, I intend to give the Presbyterian answer to his question," replied Agnes, almost cheerfully. "I would write again to father, but he is to be absent from home for a few days at this time. I will call upon Dr. Ranney; perhaps I can find assistance in his library, without consulting him personally."

"I wish you would go to-morrow afternoon; then we can walk home together."

Agnes consented to an arrangement so agree-

able to herself, and promised, not only to be at Mrs. Leson's by the close of the service, but to be thoroughly furnished with proof positive of the existence of genuine Presbyterian churches in apostolic times, if it was to be found in the extensive library of Dr. Ranney.

"Should you discover that the early Church was under the government of Bishops, what would you do?"

"Find out, if possible, who placed them in authority."

"And if you should find that the order was instituted by Christ himself, and to be preserved by his promise and presence from the days of the divinely-appointed Apostles until the end of the world—what would you do then?" asked Carrie, her eyes sparkling, as if anticipating a victory.

Agnes answered, calmly and unhesitatingly, "I would acknowledge them as my teachers, and place myself under their guidance."

"And you will try to find them, if you can?"

"I shall seek for the truth, Carrie. My father has prayerfully studied this subject for many years, and he is a man of no limited research and learning, and I doubt not his faith rests upon a rock. But I would not shake your faith, Carrie—your perfect confidence in the apostolic origin of the Church of which you are a member. As long as you possess that assurance,

and the commendation of your God, guard well every crevice where a doubt may creep in."

Tom's step in the hall caused Agnes to throw down her work, and, with flushing cheeks and expectant eyes, to hasten to the door. Carrie never went to meet him; for he brought her no letters, and left her only a sad, lonesome heart.

A package of books was delivered to Agnes, but no letter. She was evidently greatly disappointed.

"Look over your letters again, Tom; I am sure there must have been one sent with this package?"

"No, ma'am; there was none, ma'am. That came by express, all the way from Boston, ma'am."

"There may be a letter inside the package," suggested Carrie, silently observant of Agnes' excitement, and wondering who it could be in Boston sending her books. Agnes had told her of all her relatives and friends, but never of one living there; nor had she ever spoken to her of the pretty gold locket she constantly wore, although Carrie well knew that she looked at it long and tenderly every night before closing her eyes in sleep. Carrie had a right to guess, to herself, and she did.

From the first book Agnes opened, a tiny note fell out. Her face was radiant with joy

when she saw it, but it saddened as she read its brief contents. She was still lingering over the beloved signature, when Miss Lacy entered, having announced her entrance by a light, and almost inaudible rap. Her face was most serious, and her manner quite as authoritative as usual.

"I am commissioned by Mrs. Timmons," she said, approaching the table, and resting her hand on the lately-arrived package, "to examine, in accordance with the rules of this Institution, the books which you have just received; and if they are such as would merit her disapprobation, or that of your father, to deprive you of them, leaving them subject to his disposal."

A hot tide rushed through Agnes' whole frame, and her every feeling rebelled indignantly against the interference. She, however, maintained her outward composure, and made not the least reply; and Miss Lacy continued:

"It is a rule of the Institution—and as you must know, Miss Ryland, a very wise one—that books shall not be introduced among the pupils until their contents have been approved by the Faculty."

"You have been strangely neglectful of its observance heretofore," said Agnes. "I have probably received a larger number of books than any other pupil in the school, and this is the first time I have heard of the existence of

such a regulation. I will, however, submit to the wishes of Mrs. Timmons in this matter. I have not examined the books in question—not even their titles—and of course know not their character.”

“We have not been strict enough in our observance of that rule, I know,” answered Miss Lacy, “and the result is, we have lately discovered that quite a number of infidel works are circulating among the young ladies;” and she cast a quick, accusing glance toward Agnes’ calm face, and was silent.

“What do you call ‘infidel works?’” she asked, quietly. “It is difficult to understand the term, when every thing slightly heterodox is branded as infidelity.”

“As Christians, my dear,” said Miss Lacy, in a subdued tone, and with her blandest smile, “as Christians, not as sectarians, we make the Scriptures our test; and whatever we find at variance with their teachings, or encouraging disbelief in them or their Giver, we cannot and will not permit to be read within the walls of Barley Wood.”

Agnes refrained from farther reply. She was not inclined to rebel against any known regulation of the school, or to defend her right to the books, should they fall under censure. Miss Lacy’s imperiousness was offensive and irritating, but unworthy of rebuke; her limitations of

orthodoxy, vague and amusing, but Agnes understood her meaning perfectly. It was strange, very strange that she had never, until now, been informed of a rule so important. Had her father written to them? The suspicion was too humiliating to retain for a moment.

Agnes had reason to believe the unexamined package contained the writings of Theodore Parker, or others of that school; but before satisfying herself on that point, she requested Miss Lacy to make the necessary examination. The lady bowed approvingly, and slowly lifted one of the large volumes from the table. One glance at the title-page, and she dropped the book as if its covers were infectious; and stood gazing at Agnes in speechless horror.

“What is it, Miss Lacy?” asked Agnes, who, expecting the shock, was infinitely amused.

“My dear Miss Ryland, I beg you to tell me, were those books sent to your address in accordance with your wishes, or are they an unexpected gift from some one professing to be your friend?”

“I requested my friend to send them to me,” she answered, composedly. “I wished to be prepared fairly to approve, or disapprove, of their sentiments.”

“Must we, then, eat poison fruit, to prove it is deadly?” and her little gray eyes glowed hotly. “Are you not aware, Miss Ryland, of the infi-

delity—the rank, insinuating infidelity—of that author?”

“To whom do you refer?” was Agnes’ quiet inquiry.

Miss Lacy breathed, in a frightened whisper, the name of Parker, pointing to the fallen volume, and Agnes hastened to say—

“Since sending for those books, Miss Lacy, I have become better acquainted with the doctrines taught by that author, and have no desire to read him further. If the package contains any more of his books, you may take them at once to Mrs. Timmons, if you choose; I do not care to keep them.”

“You say you have become convinced of his infidelity since sending for these books. Tell me, Miss Ryland, are there any of Theodore Parker’s writings now in the school? Ah me! what Satanic influences have been, and are still hidden among us;” and she closed her eyes in pathetic remembrance of the ace of diamonds.

Agnes did not hesitate to name the owner of the book she had cursorily read, as a variety of that class of reading might be seen at any time on Ellen Butler’s table. That they had never circulated, to any extent, in the Seminary, Agnes could positively affirm; she doubted whether another pupil in the school would care to read them.

“I must hasten to Mrs. Timmons,” gasped the excited Miss Lacy; and, without looking at

the remaining five volumes, gathered them up, and, with a doleful sigh, bustled out of the room.

“I would go down and see Mrs. Timmons at once, were I in your place,” said Carrie, who wore the more serious countenance of the two. “There is no telling what she will say to Mrs. Timmons, and I fear you will then have more trouble than ever.”

Agnes replied cheerfully, “I would rather not confront Miss Lacy again, in her present mood. It would be useless for me to attempt to convince Mrs. Timmons of any thing in opposition to this temporary whirlwind. Ellen Butler will have done much to bring about a calm, before I am summoned for trial.”

“I wish she had been here,” said Carrie; “I really think that Miss Lacy is afraid of her.”

“Her presence would only have made the interview more stormy. I am glad I did not say more, and wish I had said less. It would have been a gratification, certainly, to have read the titles, at least, of the books sent me, before they were taken away. This sudden observation of a rule we never heard of before, has an air of mystery about it.”

“It is as strange as your father’s letter,” said Carrie; “a remarkable coincidence.”

“I think it befits me to prepare for active service,” said Agnes, striving to laugh away her

tears, "having the double charge of apostasy and infidelity to defend myself against."

"Do you think Mrs. Timmons will return your books?"

"Yes; but I don't know as I care to see them again. I do not, if they are of the character of the one which shocked Miss Lacy. I have doubt enough already; I am searching for the truth, rather than merely seeking to discover error. I will have nothing to do with any thing that adds rather to my unbelief, than to my faith."

CHAPTER XI.

"THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS."

AGNES had a brief interview with Mrs. Timmons the next morning, happily uninterrupted by Miss Lacy. She found her deeply grieved by the exaggerated reports delivered to her the evening before, but willing to accept the frank explanation which dispelled her most distressing fears. The books were returned with affectionate advice, for which Agnes was grateful, and Ellen Butler's library and infidelity were left undisturbed. When Agnes returned to her room she found Carrie in an ecstasy of delight, owing to an invitation she had just received from Mrs. Bellamy for them to take tea at the Rectory. Agnes wrote a note of acceptance, and then added to Carrie's happiness by proposing to accompany her to church that afternoon if she would first call with her upon Dr. Ranney.

If was a difficult task for Carrie to apply her thoughts to her books that morning; they would overleap all restraint and wander off to the cheerful home-room at the Rectory, the pastor's pleasant words, Mrs. Bellamy's genial face, and the sportive laugh of the children. Her soul

had comfort in its loneliness—a loneliness not half so drear since Agnes Ryland came and took her tenderly to her bosom. She felt, with devout gratitude, there was one heart above the grave-mould that loved her; that the world was not so empty and wintry as before, and God more mindful of her great necessity than her stricken spirit had sometimes thought Him to be. Never, until then, had there been a cherished name for her to blend in her prayers. You, of **many** idols, can you imagine the dearth of such a **soul**? Fervently had she raised her petitions for all of God's people, and the wanderers out of His fold, but until Agnes Ryland came there had not been one above the others for whom, at morning, noonday, and night, she thanked her God, and made particular request. Carrie's head would drop upon her slate with thinking of all this, and her tears fall upon the long problems she had been solving half in a dream.

Agnes' appeal to Dr. Ranney's voluminous library, as well as to him, afforded her little or no satisfaction. He was absent when they reached the parsonage, and as it was more than an hour from church time, Carrie cheerfully consented to wait while Agnes made the research for herself. She knew what track to pursue, and many a dusty volume she brought from its dark corner. Certainly, at a very early age, the Church was in all places under an Episcopacy. Presbyte-

rian divines admitted that unpleasant fact. "In Palestine and Syria, in Armenia and India, in Greece and Italy, in France and England, in Spain and Africa, from Antioch to Canterbury, from Asia Minor to Abyssinia, over three continents, and in all the islands of the sea, the Church was everywhere Episcopal. It was the age of piety, the age of miracle, the age of martyrdom, while the kiss of peace yet bore witness to the heart's purity, and the saints, in humility, stooped down and washed each other's feet. Yet, in this age of truth and danger, there was, in every city, and island, and town, one, and one only, who was known as the chief pastor or bishop of the place. . . . And when the fires of martyrdom blazed high and bright, there was, in every city and town, *one*, known alike to Christian, Jew, and Pagan, as the chief shepherd, who must first unbind his girdle and lay down his life for the flock. . . . When, in the sixth century, Rome sent Augustine and his companions into England to convert the Anglians, they found a Church in her beauty, using the ceremony of the Oriental Christians, claiming parentage from the successors of St. John; also tracing her annals to the very person of St. Paul, and adorned with a hierarchy that, two or three centuries before, had sent its prelates to the councils of Arles, Sardica, and Ariminum. When Buchanan made his journeys to the East he found,

in the clefts of the rocks and the fastnesses of Syria, the remnant of the disciples of St. Thomas, a simple and frugal flock, claiming descent from Israel, according to the flesh, for thirteen centuries cut off from the Christian world, but hugging to their hearts a beautiful liturgy, erecting the simple cross upon the altar as the sufficient expression of their faith, evincing their ancient and Jewish origin by retaining the thank-offerings, the sacrificial lamb, and the circumcision of the Jews, and having and holding in reverence the order and office of the bishops." Dr. Wolf, in his mission to the outcast races of the earth, "found in the whole circuit of his travels that, Greek or Armenian, Coptic or Syrian, every thing Christian, and bearing traces of antiquity, had everywhere its triune priesthood of bishops, priests, and deacons." "Luther and Calvin lamented the loss of the Episcopacy, and professed the intention to restore it when it should be practicable." Calvin declared, "If the bishops so hold their dignity, that they refuse not to submit to Christ, *no anathema is too great* for those who do not regard such a hierarchy with reverence and the most implicit obedience." From Blondel, the learned Presbyterian, she read: "By all we have said to assert the rights of Presbytery, we do not intend to invalidate *the ancient and apostolical constitutions of Episcopal pre-eminence*, but that wheresoever it

has been put down or violated, *it ought to be reverently restored.*" She found that Grotius, to whom Dr. Bellamy particularly referred her, had said: "To reject the supremacy of one pastor above the rest, is to condemn the whole ancient Church of folly, or even impiety." And again, "The Episcopacy had its commencement *in the times of the Apostles. All the fathers, without exception, testify to this.* The testimony of Jerome, alone, is sufficient. The catalogues of the bishops in Irenæus, Socrates, Theodoret, and others, all of which begin in the apostolic age, testify to this. To refuse credit, *in an historical matter*, to so great *authorities*, and so *unanimous* among themselves, is not the part of any but an irreverent and stubborn disposition. What the whole Church maintains, and was not instituted by councils, but *was always held*, is not, with any good reason, believed to be handed down by any but *apostolic authority.*"

"Does it mean that the early Church was under an Episcopal, instead of a Presbyterian form of government?" was Agnes' troubled inquiry of Dr. Ranney.

"The doctrine of bishops," he replied, very gravely, "was one of the first errors that subtly crept within the early Church. It is the supposition of our learned Dr. Miller, that the thing happened in this wise: through compliment to the discretion, piety or age of the Moderators of

the Presbytery, they were permitted to hold their office from one sitting to another; at length the office came to be considered permanent, until at last these standing moderators took the name of bishops, while the rest of the clergy were notified to keep the name of presbyters; and what occurred at Rome occurred at Alexandria, and what happened at Alexandria happened at Canterbury; and in fact, every city and town on the three continents presented the same phenomenon."

"But where did it begin? *when* did it occur?" asked Agnes, dissatisfied.

"We have no means of knowing; it stole gradually, subtly upon the Church."

"It is marvellous that so great a change should have taken place universally and simultaneously," said Agnes, musing; "I should think there would have been an outcry from some quarter."

"My idea is," said Dr. Ranney, "that the truth lies somewhere between the two systems of Presbytery and Episcopacy; that the former had unduly abridged, and the latter had unduly expanded, the respective powers of pastor, elder, and deacon. I *suppose* there was in every congregation, by advice of the Apostles, a pastor, a bench of elders, and a board of deacons—and, I *suppose*, that in the absence of the pastor, an elder might have been allowed to pray, exhort,

baptize, and discharge other functions of the pastor, and that these deacons also shared in the ministerial office to the sick and dying, as the preaching of Stephen, and the ministration of baptism by Philip, justify. In cities and towns, the pastor might have sent his elders out into destitute neighborhoods to collect converts into new congregations; and thus, by degrees, the ruling became the teaching elder, imperceptibly, while the pastor became naturally overseer, bishop, or chief pastor of the whole circle of congregations. This will account for the small extent of the early dioceses, and the great number of bishops."

Agnes was still dissatisfied. She did not ask, or wish for *suppositions*—it was the direct testimony she cared for. The early Church was under an Episcopacy. The hypothesis that it had been gradually introduced, without awakening a single cry, or remonstrance from any part of Christendom, she rejected as absurd. It would not do to *suppose* it was violently introduced into the Church, or in any degree against the wishes of the people, or the clergy, for the absence of all clamor, or notice of the event, precluded such a conjecture. She did not care to talk longer with Dr. Ranney upon the subject; it was evident he had nothing but suppositions to offer.

Carrie had been a silent but attentive listener during their conversation. She had not ex-

pected such a complete disappointment for Agnes, and she delicately refrained from mentioning the subject when they were on their way to church. Agnes was thoughtful and cast down—she had looked for the day-break at midnight—for light when the darkness was growing more dense. Carrie prayed for her peace—"the peace that passeth all understanding," as they knelt side by side in the transept corner, and when the service began, Agnes was still upon her knees, her tears falling like rain.

Weary and heavy laden as she was, her soul panting with its thirst for comfort and light, how could she refrain from taking part in a service which expressed every need and hidden desire she had? She could not, and fervently she joined in the prayer and praise of the little flock, and her spirit was comforted and refreshed. She discovered new beauties in the liturgy, and was grateful for the aid it had given her.

Agnes was a little disappointed when the service closed without a sermon. She had yet to learn that prayer is the chief object of our assembling together, and that the sermon is but a secondary thing—that we go to "the House of Prayer," and not to the House of Preaching. Her soul was satisfied to fulness with the heavenly feast, and as she unwillingly withdrew from the hallowed atmosphere of the place, she resolved to go thither again.

Mrs. Bellamy and the children were waiting for them in the porch, the latter greeting them with an overflow of childish joy it was difficult to restrain until their impatient feet were out of the church. With happy hearts and faces, they proceeded to the Rectory, where another welcome awaited them from little Georgie, who had grown impatient in watching from the library window.

The tea things were removed, and all but the children, who were having a merry game of hide and seek, drew in a circle around the cheerful grate—Mrs. Bellamy with her sewing, for her needle had but little chance to rest—and Mary with her knitting, for she had seen some blue little fingers that day, that must be provided for. Carrie had drawn close beside Mrs. Bellamy, and bending over the torn frock with her, they were talking in a low confidential tone, pardonably forgetful of everybody else in the room. Agnes, with absorbed and radiant face, was watching the sport of the children, directing them to safe hiding-places, and joining in their exultant laughter when a discovery was made. Mr. Bellamy came in with a bountiful supply of nuts and apples, which were announced by Georgie's gleeful shout, causing a sudden emerging of little heads from under the tables and chairs.

Mr. Bellamy seated himself by Agnes, and

good-naturedly driving the chattering flock that surrounded him to the corner of the room monopolized by their playthings, and devoted to confusion generally, began the conversation, by pleasantly asking her if she could furnish him with the information she had promised.

"I am not prepared to do so to-night," she replied, with a betrayal of her disappointment that was silently observed by Mr. Bellamy. "My investigations have proved unsatisfactory, yet I am still encouraged to resume them."

"What did you find?" he asked kindly, and without the slightest manifestation of triumph.

Agnes made the acknowledgment unwillingly, yet with her characteristic frankness.

"I found that the Church was early placed under an Episcopacy, but I could not ascertain the time of the change, or its cause."

"Presbyterians have professed to explain both," said Mr. Bellamy, mildly. "Did you read any of their arguments on the subject?"

Agnes colored more deeply.

"I met with their *suppositions*. I must have direct testimony. Nothing of mere conjecture, no matter how great its weight or plausibility, can satisfy me on this subject."

"You want direct testimony, and the support of Scriptures and ancient authors," added Mr. Bellamy.

"Yes, and I hope yet to find them," she re-

plied. Both were silent for some time. Mr. Bellamy seemed inclined to let the subject drop, at which Agnes was surprised, for she had expected a fierce attack. He had surely no intention of proselytizing her, or he would have improved that opportunity when she was so weakly prepared to defend herself. She thought of what her good father's course would have been under like circumstances. He never misimproved an opportunity for "contending for *the* faith once delivered to the Saints."

"I should like to know your views upon this subject," she said; "or the doctrine taught by your Church. Have you plain Scripture proof of the divine institution of Episcopacy?"

"We believe we have the plainest," replied Mr. Bellamy, with an interest which had not been slumbering. "It will afford me much pleasure to present to you, as briefly as possible, this great doctrine of our Church."

"Can you tell me when, and by whom it was founded?" asked Agnes, with a significant smile. "I shall lay great stress upon undeniable facts."

"Pray do so, Miss Ryland," was the earnest reply. "We believe that the Episcopal government of the Church was founded in the person of our Lord himself. Christ was *sent* by his Father, to be the great Apostle, Bishop, and Pastor of the Church, and was visibly consecrated to that office by the Holy Ghost. He chose and

sent forth His Apostles as His Father had sent Him, giving to them the Holy Ghost as His Father had given to Him, and He commissioned them to execute the same apostolic, Episcopal, and pastoral office in their own persons, and in that of their successors, for the governing of His Church, until His coming again, promising to be with them 'always, even unto the end of the world'—a promise which could be fulfilled, only by His presence with their successors. He could not mean that the Twelve or their brethren, were to live forever on the earth. He spoke not of their persons, but their office, and the promise was, that the true Church should never be left without Apostles, but be guided by their successors to the end of time.

"In the short Scriptural history we have of the Apostles, we find them exercising all the peculiar offices of the Episcopal order. They ordain Church ministers, as we read in Acts: 'and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.' They confirm baptized persons, as, 'when the Apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for although they were baptized, He was fallen upon none of them, until they laid their hands on them.' They excommunicate notorious offenders, as the incestuous person, mentioned in Corinthians. The like

Episcopal powers we find committed to others, whom, from the tenor of Scripture, and the testimony of antiquity, we judge to have been ordained to that order. Not only a power of ordination, but a particular charge in conferring it is given to Timothy; namely, that he 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' He is to caution the presbyters under him, 'that they preach no other doctrine.' Rules are given him how he should censure an offending presbyter: 'Against an elder, receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses,' and to what conduct he should oblige the deacons. The same Episcopal powers are committed to Titus, to 'ordain elders in every city,' and to excommunicate heretics, after the first or second admonition. Now these are surely good proofs, that the order of Bishops was instituted in the Apostles' time."

"But what authority have you," asked Agnes, in a deferential manner, "for placing Bishops above presbyters?"

"The authority of Scriptural example. All the Apostles were Bishops, and as such received their commission from Christ, and under this commission they could exercise equal powers, plant churches, and ordain teachers as they thought necessary. But it does not follow, because they received but one commission, and were alike authorized to perform all the duties of the apostolical, or Episcopal office, that the

same equality descended to all that they ordained. We know it did not in regard to the deacons, for Peter and John went down from Jerusalem to Samaria to confirm the converts whom Philip had baptized, which it seems he had not the power to do. And there are very strong circumstances which show, also, a difference in this respect from presbyters. Timothy was the Bishop of Ephesus; and I do not see how any candid person can read St. Paul's Epistle to him without being satisfied that he had the sole government of the Church in that place, as it respects the ordination and reproof of presbyters, and many things relating to the worship and conduct of the flock. Now, had the presbyters at Ephesus equal authority with Timothy? We read in the twentieth chapter of the Acts that St. Paul called together the elders or presbyters of this Church and addressed them in the most affectionate language for the last time. And it is not surprising that he does not say one word to them about governing the Church, ordaining, reproof, etc., when he never expected to see them again, and when, according to the system of parity, this was as much their duty as it was that of Timothy? He tells them to feed the flock of God, but to Timothy he points out the qualifications of those whom he was to ordain, and directs him to 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' Can we reasonably say that Timothy

was not superior to these presbyters? and if so, to what order did he belong, if it were not that of Bishops? The directions given to him are such as are followed by the Bishops of the Episcopal Church at the present day. Nor do they, as far as I am acquainted, exceed the duties which he was commanded to perform; and so strong is the evidence from this particular, that it was said by a celebrated divine, 'that he who could not find a Bishop in Ephesus, would be puzzled to find one in England.'

"A further testimony from Scripture, in support of Episcopacy, we perceive in the direction to the angels of the seven churches in Asia, in the Revelation. These angels we may reasonably suppose were Bishops, who had the jurisdiction over all the churches in the cities where they respectively dwelt. In the churches at Ephesus were probably many societies, and consequently a considerable number of presbyters. Still, one person is addressed as the angel or Bishop of the church at Ephesus, and so at Smyrna, Thyatira, and the rest. But if there were no distinct order of Bishops, superior to that of presbyters, all the latter were angels, and had equal power to reform abuses, and confirm piety. The Church collectively, as including all the different societies in a city, is called a candlestick, to which one star is attached. To me, this intimates at least diocesan Episcopacy,

and seems in perfect agreement with the instances to which I have before alluded."

"But is it not conceded by many pious and learned Episcopalians," Agnes asked, almost in the words of her father's letter, "that Bishop and Presbyter are terms of the same meaning in the New Testament; that Bishops are called Presbyters, and Presbyters are denominated Bishops?"

Mr. Bellamy smiled. "There has been a great outcry on that point among the enemies of the Church, as if words were to be the subject of contention. Episcopalians have never disputed that Bishop and Presbyter were the words in use to designate the pastoral office. In the first Christian age, the name Apostle described one who had been personally sent by Christ Himself; it was therefore *reserved* to the Twelve appointed by Him, and was not assumed by any of their successors, except St. Matthias, St. Paul, and St. Barnabas, whose calls were of a peculiar kind. The pastoral office was called by both the names of Bishop and Presbyter. When the Apostles had passed from the earth, their successors, 'not thinking themselves meet to be called Apostles,' adopted the humbler name of Bishops, which, by consent, was to be thenceforth entirely theirs, leaving to pastors—who did not require so many names to designate their office—the name of Presbyter. The apos-

tolic office was unchanged; it had only taken a new name. Theodoret, the Syrian Bishop, and disciple of St. Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, has beautifully transmitted this fact. He says:

"The same persons were in ancient times called indifferently Presbyters or Bishops, at which time those who are now called Bishops, *were called Apostles*. But shortly after, the name of apostles was left to such as were Apostles in the strict sense, and then the name of Bishop was given to *those who before had been called apostles*. That this motive did operate and was natural to the breasts of holy and humble-minded men, may be gathered from the language of St. Paul, himself, who, feeling himself less than the least of all, exclaims: 'I am not meet to be called an Apostle.' Apostle is the rightful name of those we call Bishops, and was only laid aside because of the humility of the early successors to the Episcopal office."

"I cannot yet see how your Bishops have a rightful claim to the name of apostle," said Agnes. "The Apostles saw the Lord—whom their successors have not seen,—they wrought miracles, and were individually inspired. Their successors surely cannot pretend to all this?"

"You believe an apostle must be one who has seen the Lord, can speak with tongues, can work miracles, and has the gift of inspiration?"

"I do," replied Agnes, seriously. "I believe those to have been the signs distinguishing an Apostle from a Presbyter or Deacon."

"According to that," said Mr. Bellamy, smiling, "Presbyterians must cease limiting the number of Apostles to twelve, and allow that even in the days of St. Paul, the multitude, possessing rightful claim to that name, was too great for any man to number. We are told that devout women, and about five hundred brethren at once, saw the Lord after He was risen—but did that make them Apostles? We read that the disciples of St. John the Baptist,—when St. Paul had baptized them with a Christian baptism, and had laid his confirming hands on them,—and also a confused multitude in the Church of Corinth, spake constantly with tongues—but does that prove they were Apostles? The disciples at Ephesus, and the four daughters of Philip, and certain who came from Jerusalem to Antioch, were all inspired. They foretold things unknown to the Apostles, and which had much to do in shaping their course—but did that make them apostles? Stephen and Philip, who were but deacons, and their brethren, filled Jerusalem and Samaria with the fame of their stupendous miracles, and St. James speaks of presbyters who could raise the sick by anointing them with oil—but these were not Apostles. Let me read you a brief extract from

an author whose words I have been largely quoting." Going to the library he took down a volume from its shelves.

"It is upon the subject of our conversation," resumed Mr. Bellamy, after finding the desired page; "and thus he says:

"Having seen the Lord, speaking with tongues, working miracles, and being inspired, were never the marks by which to distinguish an Apostle from a deacon, from a presbyter, or even from a layman or woman. All the facts on the face of Scripture tend to the same point. When St. Paul writes to a church—for example, to the Church of Corinth—it is not to speak with tongues that he intrudes; for, he says to them, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' It is not to dazzle them with the splendor of miracles that he interferes; for, he declares, 'Though I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.' It is not to tell them that he exclusively had seen the Lord; for he appeals to five hundred witnesses of the great event. It is not to utter prophecy, or convince by inspiration; for, in all these gifts, the Church was already itself illustrious. Nor was it to impart the Holy Supper; nor was it to baptize; nor was it to preach the Gospel merely; for Corinth had her Eucharist and established ministry al-

ready. But it was to assert a jurisdiction, an 'authority,' 'a power which the Lord had given him' to tell them that sinned, and all other, that 'if he came, he would not spare;' to deliver one particularly who had sinned 'unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved;' to declare his 'forgiveness and restoration of the penitent to a place and hope among the faithful;' to enjoin the weekly offertory for the saints, as he had 'given order in the churches of Galatia;' and to assert the right as to 'the rest' of their affairs, to 'set them in order when he should come.' Miracles, tongues, inspiration, having seen the Lord—what are they all but incidental circumstances, which might or might not exist in the persons of the presbyters and deacons?"

Mr. Bellamy closed the volume; Agnes sat in silent thought.

"Had we lived in the days of the Apostles, Miss Ryland," he continued, "we should have had one plain test, among others, for discovering the true Church, in spite of counterfeits."

"What was it? We have lost it now."

"Far from it; it still remains, the true sign, as then, of the true Christian body. The primitive Church was governed by men *commissioned* by the Apostles; those who denied their governance were broken branches—schismatics."

"Have you undoubting faith in your line of

Bishops?" asked Agnes. "Have you clear proof of its unbroken connection with the Apostles?"

"The Master's promise," replied Mr. Bellamy, with impressive earnestness; "'Lo, I am with you always,' is enough to assure the humble believer that no such breach has occurred, or can occur, to the end of the world. Besides, the utmost pains have always been taken in every branch of the Church to keep the succession regular and pure. One of the apostolical canons enjoins that *two or three* Bishops, at least, shall unite in every consecration. The succession, therefore, does not depend upon a line of single Bishops, in one diocese, running back to the Apostles; because every Bishop has had, at least, three to ordain him, either one of whom had power to perpetuate the succession. The claim of any duly consecrated Bishop to the apostolic succession is more certain than that of any monarch upon earth to his hereditary crown. Lists of the apostolical succession, in descent from the different Apostles, have been carefully preserved by Eusebius and other early writers, and they have been continued in different lines down to the present day. If you wish to consult them at any time, you will find, in my library, 'Percival on Apostolical Succession,' and 'Chapin's Primitive Church.' Rome can trace her line to St. Peter—the Greeks to St. Paul—

the Syrians and Nestorians to St. Thomas; and the American Episcopal Church to St. John. Bishop White, the head of the American line of Bishops, was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. I can show you the list, beginning with St. John, and coming down through the Episcopate of Lyons, in France or Gaul, and that of Canterbury in England, until it connects with ours in the United States."

"I shall be pleased to examine it some time," replied Agnes; "but what you say concerning your line of Bishops is entirely different from my preconceived opinions. Did not the British Church derive its origin from Rome, and was it not for a long time dependent upon it?"

"That is a very common error, Miss Ryland, and one that our enemies persist in believing, or professing to believe, at least, in the face of the clearest historical evidence. The Church of England is entirely independent of Rome. There is no evidence whatever of any such dependence. No trace can be found of the Pope of Rome having exercised any ecclesiastical authority in England *for the first six hundred years after Christ*; and it is certain that England did not receive her Christianity at first through Rome; indeed there is very good ground for believing that the Church of England is some years *older than that of Rome*."

This was surprising intelligence to Agnes. She still looked skeptical.

"One strong proof of the independence of our origin," continued Mr. Bellamy, "is the English word *Church*, which is derived from the Greek, and is a term which no Roman ever applied to the Church. It is not credible, that, if the Church of England had been derived from Rome, it should have been designated by a title foreign to Rome. The fact that the British Church, and indeed a great portion of the Saxon Church, from A. D. 635 to A. D. 664, followed the Asiatic custom in keeping Easter, and in its manner of administering baptism, points in which they differed from the Roman Church, seems to show that the Church of England sprang from a Greek or Asiatic source, that from which Rome herself originated—from the Mother of all Churches—the Church of Jerusalem."

"But what is it about Henry VIII.?" asked Agnes; "was not the Church of England, as it now exists, born in his time; and is he not rightly called the father of it?"

"The Church of England reformed herself during his reign, and, corrupt man that he was, he was an instrument in the hands of God to aid her in her reformation. 'Jehu did not please God, but his reformation did. Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus were idolatrous, but their edicts for God's service were religious.' The reforma-

tion of the Church of England has, however, no concern with the personal character of Henry VIII., nor with the motives of his conduct; although we have much reason to praise Him who frequently causes good to come out of evil, for thus mercifully overruling the headstrong passions of a cruel and ungodly prince, to the good of His Church and the glory of His name."

"But did she not become a *new* Church at the Reformation?" asked Agnes. "And if so, is she much more than three hundred years old?"

"The errors of the English Church were not the Church herself; and in quitting them she did not quit herself, any more than a man changes his skin when he cleanses it, or loses his identity when he recovers from a disease. The English Church, after the Reformation, was as much the English Church as Naaman was Naaman after he had washed in the river Jordan; indeed, as 'his flesh then came again,' so was she restored to her healthful self at the Reformation. She reformed herself because she loved what was *old*, and did not love what was *new*. She was founded in the apostolic age; at the Reformation she recovered herself from the errors into which she had fallen; and she proceeded in all this gradually and moderately, lawfully and wisely, with the joint deliberation and co-operation of her universities, her clergy, and the people of England in Parliament assem-

bled; and, finally, with the ratification of the crown."

"But," said Agnes, "you claim that she is the true Church, and has ever been the Pillar of the Truth. How could she have been when infected with the corruptions of Papal Rome?"

"Christ did not forsake her, erring and sinful as she was. Were not the Jews still his chosen people, even when most rebellious and unworthy of divine favor? Jerusalem was 'the Holy City,' though its rulers cast out the Lord's anointed. The Ark of God was the Ark of God, even when in the hands of the Philistines; and the vessels of the temple were holy even at Babylon. So the Church of England, though she had fallen from her former purity, was still a Church while under the Pope. If she was not the Church then, we admit that she is not the Church now. The Israelites and Jews had the Law and the Prophets and a Priesthood in the worst times, and were so God's people. The Apostolic and Apocalyptic Churches, though tainted with sundry corruptions, are called Churches in Holy Writ; so in Popish times the Church of England had, by God's mercy, the *essentials of a Church*, though greatly marred and obscured. She had the Christian Sacraments, the Holy Scriptures, an Apostolic succession of Ministers, the Lord's Prayer, the three Creeds, and the Ten Commandments, and she was therefore a Church."

The old-fashioned clock in the corner, broke in with striking the hour of nine, an unwelcome sound to Agnes, as well as to the children who were cracking nuts in high glee. Mary immediately laid down her knitting, with what they considered provoking punctuality—and led the reluctant little feet to bed, after the rosy, half-pouting lips had gone kissing around the circle.

Half-past nine was the extreme limit of time the young ladies of Barley Wood were allowed to be absent in the evening. Agnes was little inclined to withdraw, and Carrie was so engaged with Mrs. Bellamy she had not the faintest thought of the time or Barley Wood. Agnes looked anxiously towards the clock, wishing its great hands would stop moving. It was an unpleasant task for her to remind Carrie of the hour.

"Oh dear!" sighed Carrie, casting a rebuking glance at the old time-piece. "I do not want to go back."

"I wish you could stay as long as you would like to," said Mrs. Bellamy.

"That would surely be forever," was the quick response of the homeless child—her eyes swimming as she spoke. "I was never in a place where I loved to be half as well."

Charlie was to take them home, and while he had gone for the sleigh, and they were making ready for their departure, Agnes, whose mind

was harassed with perplexing thoughts, ventured to put another question to Mr. Bellamy.

"There is one of the doctrines of your Church," she said, modestly, "which I cannot reconcile with my idea of Christian charity. If I am rightly informed, you do not acknowledge a man to be a minister sent by God, no matter how learned, or pious, or instrumental in saving souls he may be, unless he has been Episcopally ordained. Am I right?"

"It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which offices were evermore had in such reverend Estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this Church, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in this Church, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had Epis-

copal Consecration or Ordination. And none shall be admitted a Deacon, Priest, or Bishop, except he be of the age which the Canon in that case provided may require. And the Bishop, knowing either by himself, or by sufficient testimony, any Person to be a man of virtuous conversation, and without crime; and, after examination and trial, finding him sufficiently instructed in the Holy Scripture, and otherwise learned as the Canons require, may, at the times appointed, or else, on urgent occasions, upon some other day, in the face of the Church, admit him a Deacon, in such manner and form as followeth."

"That is the doctrine of the Church, and what I sincerely believe," replied Mr. Bellamy; "and, I may safely add, what is taught by Scripture. It has been a law of the Church from the apostolic age, that the ministerial commission can only come from Christ, through the Apostles, in an unbroken succession. 'As my Father sent me, so send I you.' The apostolic commission is purely a matter of fact. Christian charity has nothing to do with historical *facts*. We say that a man must receive the ministerial commission from the great Head of the Church, through the hands of a successor of the Apostles, whose authority to ordain ministers, has come down, in unbroken succession from the Apostles, and that this being the divine mode of constituting and

perpetuating the Christian ministry, he who has not such a commission, is not by us to be received as a lawfully ordained minister in the Church of Christ. (If we were to say that persons non-Episcopally ordained *knew* that they had no lawful authority to preach, yet still persisted in it, there would be a violation of Christian charity.) Neither learning, nor piety, nor pulpit powers,—nor men, nor women, nor any thing of earth, can of themselves make a minister of Christ. God makes His own ministers in His own way. Let me read to you what occurred to the good missionary Wolff, in his travels to the far East. He went out as a Presbyterian."

The book was close at hand, and Mr. Bellamy was but a few moments in finding the place.

"'What Bishop sent you out?' was addressed to me by the great Patriarch of the Armenians, by the whole body of Bishops at the pool of Mount Ararat, by the Syrian Patriarch, by the Coptic Bishops, by the great Patriarch, and by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Bagdad. When I replied, 'My internal voice sent me forth.' They answered, 'Moses heard the voice of God on Horeb, but God Himself deemed it necessary to endow him with the gift of miracles, in order that Pharaoh might be forced to acknowledge him as an extraordinary ambassador; and the ordinary ministers of God had to receive their

commission from Moses; and Christ made the same provision in His church. He imparted the gift of miracles to the Apostles in sending them forth, but they instituted Bishops by the imposition of hands, and charged them to follow up that mode of ordaining ministers. *If you, Joseph Wolff, are an extraordinary minister, prove it by miracles; if an ordinary one, who laid hands on you? Your internal voice is evidence to you, not to us.* The argument was conclusive. Wolff admitted it, came to this country, and was ordained by the Bishop of New Jersey."

"I would like to read you an extract from Dr. Isaac Barrow," said Mr. Bellamy, laying down the volume he held; "Charlie is not here yet, and if you should be a little late, I think Mrs. Timmons will be lenient. It relates more directly to the subject we started from,—the institution of the Episcopacy."

"I shall be pleased to listen," said Agnes.

"It is a weighty answer to the erroneous supposition entertained by many who investigate the subject of the government of the early Church, and find it to have been Episcopal. Dr. Barrow says: 'The primitive general use of Christians most effectually doth back the Scripture, and interpret it in favor of this distinction, scarce less than demonstrating it constituted by the Apostles. For how otherwise is it imagina-

ble that all the churches founded by the Apostles in several most distant and disjoined places,—at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Alexandria, at Ephesus, at Corinth, at Rome,—should presently conspire in acknowledgment and use of it? How could it without apparent confederacy be formed, how could it creep in without notable clatter, how could it be admitted without considerable opposition, if it were not in the foundation of those churches laid by the Apostles? How is it likely, in those times of general persecution, falling chiefly upon the Bishops, when to be eminent among Christians yielded slender reward, and exposed to extreme hazard, when to seek pre-eminence was in effect to court danger and trouble, torture and ruin, an ambition of irregularly advancing themselves above their brethren should so generally prevail among the ablest and best Christians? How indeed, could all God's Church be so weak, as to consent in judgment, so base as to comply in practice, with it? In fine, how can we conceive, that all the best monuments of antiquity, down from the beginning, the Acts, the Epistles, the Commentaries, the writings of all sorts, coming from the blessed martyrs, and most holy confessors of our faith, should conspire to abuse us; the which do speak nothing but Bishops; long catalogues and rows of Bishops, succeeding in this and that city; Bishops contesting for the faith, against

Pagan idolators, and heretical corruptors of Christian doctrine; Bishops here teaching and planting our religion by their labors, their sufferings, and watering it with their blood?"

"Here is Charlie!" said Carrie, who, having heard the sleigh-bells, ran to the window. It was a keen, frosty night, and the little fellow stood beside his gray pony, whistling merrily. "We must not keep him waiting. Let me assist you, Aggie."

"My interest in what Mr. Bellamy was reading," replied Agnes, accepting her services, "must excuse my negligence."

"Charlie will not mind waiting a little while," said Mrs. Bellamy, holding Agnes' overshoes to the fire.

"His whistle does not bespeak much impatience," said Mr. Bellamy, glancing at the clock, whose minute-hand had journeyed past the half hour, and directing the truant school-girls to the ominous fact, expressing his willingness to bear a full share of the blame should Mrs. Timmons be greatly displeased. Mrs. Bellamy had filled for them a basket of nuts and rosy-red apples, half in remembrance of her own boarding-school days.

"You must come again very soon," she said, following them to the porch. "It is not well for you to be shut up in the Seminary all the time."

"We cannot answer for the liberty Mrs. Timmons will grant us hereafter," replied Agnes. "We shall doubtless be brought before a stern inquisition to-morrow."

"I do not think Mrs. Timmons will be very severe with you, when you make me the chief cause of the offence," said Mrs. Bellamy.

Mrs. Bellamy walked beside Carrie to the gate, and the rector and Agnes slowly followed.

"I wish to talk more with you upon the subject of our conversation this evening," said Agnes, overcoming the hesitation which had kept her silent. "I find I have been mistaken in much, and have judged blindly. Yet I would not have you understand that it is a tendency towards the Episcopal Church—a wish to become 'one of you,' that leads me to study this subject; for, if I were drawn in that direction, not only by the beautiful liturgy, but by a sound faith in your doctrines, I could never identify myself with you. I desire the truth. I am dissatisfied and unbelieving. I have little faith, and a heart full of doubtings and fears. I do not think it will be necessary for you to proselytize in order to comfort me."

"God comfort you, and lead you into the truth!" said Mr. Bellamy, fervently. "I will gladly aid you all I can. I have no small interest in you, Miss Ryland."

He spoke with an interest and feeling that re-

called to her the conversation which had taken place during her first visit at the Rectory, concerning her mother and herself. Her curiosity was again awakened, and the importance of the mystery increased. So busy was her mind in its conjecture, she scarcely spoke during their drive, nor heard a word of the pleasant talk between her companions.

There were but two lights to be seen in the Seminary building, and those proceeded from the parlor and Ellen Butler's little room in the third story. Agnes wondered what was keeping Ellen up beyond her usual time.

"Professor Cartzen must be here," said Carrie, in a whisper, when they entered the hall without disturbing any one, as the door was yet unlocked; "and Ellen is waiting to see Mollie, after he has gone."

Agnes silently admitted the supposition as true.

CHAPTER XII.

WILLING TO WAIT.

A fortnight passed—the missionary-box was filled, amply so. Every piece of work that Mollie Raymond had distributed was completed, and neatly packed into the great red chest that stood in the front hall. There were coarse, warm shirts, hose, dresses, coats, and shoes. Many of the young ladies had contributed books, and nearly all had dropped a mite into the pretty purse, safely hidden in one corner, labelled in Mollie Raymond's delicate chirography:

"TO THE GOOD MISSIONARY.

"While we have time let us do good unto all men, and especially unto them that are of the household of faith." BARLEY WOOD."

Every day, since the one appointed for the Professor's departure, the young ladies had sadly expected to bid him farewell, and to see the great chest carried after him from the house; but a fortnight passed, and found him still lingering at the hospitable firesides of the villagers, attending the prayer-meetings, and conducting

them with untiring zeal; and yet another fortnight, and the mysterious causes which detained him among them were not removed. As might have been expected, there was much surmising and gossiping on the subject, and Mollie Raymond was the envy of half the village girls.

The high tide of religious feeling, which had swept over the community for a few months, was slowly ebbing away. The prayer-meetings were less frequent, and not as well attended. Deacon Ludlow and sister Watson never failed to be there; and they, with a few others, composed the little flock which gathered together on a rainy day, or dark, stormy night. Fast-days were less numerous, and not so rigorously observed. The shutters of the principal stores were seldom put up on a week-day—the Barley Wood girls pursued their studies with fewer interruptions. Mrs. Leson ventured to decorate anew her little show-window; and Elder Watson thought it not out of season to preach a long and affecting sermon from the text, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Mollie Raymond did not sink into coldness and apathy from the reaction, as many did. Though others might backslide and grow indifferent, the intensity of her zeal did not diminish in the least. The fierce flame within her breast had paled and thinned her cheeks, and given a

lurid, unnatural brilliancy to her large, brown eyes, which had forgotten their arch mischief. She entirely neglected her books, and did not confine herself for a quiet moment to any occupation whatever. She was unwearied in her exhortations and prayers with the scoffing and indifferent; no taunting rebuff could check her interest or discourage her. If the prayer-meetings were about discontinued in the village, she did not suffer them to be at the Seminary, but nearly every night the sound of prayer and singing arose from the library, where Prof. Cartzen and herself never failed to take a conspicuous part.

Ellen Butler's strange behavior was the talk of the whole school. Her interest in Mollie and her devotion to her were unaccountable, and not less so Mollie's affection in return. That an intimacy should have sprung up between those two girls, such antipodes to each other, with interests so foreign, and social positions so widely distinct, afforded sufficient ground for conjecture and speculation. Though Ellen often attended the prayer-meetings, she manifested no farther interest in them, but sat stubbornly unmoved through the petitions which were offered in her behalf, not even raising her cold face from her knitting-work when directly addressed in exhortation. What could link her to Mollie, or Mollie to her, was an enigma none could solve; and

there was much idle whispering among the wondering girls the day it was known that Mollie Raymond had left her old friend Kitty Williams, and gone to room with Ellen Butler, in the third story. After serious perplexity as to the cause, it was decided by the majority to have arisen from a zealous missionary spirit on the part of the young enthusiast.

That month, passing fleetly to many, wearily to many more, was more than a month to Agnes Ryland, if we compute its moments by her feelings, thoughts, and struggles. It had passed

. . . . "in thoughts, not breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on the dial."

She had been most unhappy at times; then again a dim light struggled through the darkness, a calm settled upon the troubled waters, and she waited more patiently—prayed more hopefully. She was conscious of divine approval of every step she had taken, and yet she seemed to be going deeper and deeper into the night.

She had been unable to correspond with her father, which added heavily to her trials. His absence from home had been unexpectedly prolonged from one week to another, and as he was travelling from place to place, stopping but a short time in any, often uncertain where he should next direct his course, she was deprived of the privilege of writing to him; and the letter, he hurriedly despatched to her, related but

to his health and personal affairs. He never alluded to the unpleasant subject upon which he had written so severely from home; and Agnes would not have desired to mention it to him again, had she not feared to add, by silence, to his unexplained displeasure.

She had daily attended the service at St. Paul's, as well as the evening lectures. She could not resist the holy influences which drew her to that little chapel, or deprive her downcast soul of the heavenly sustenance received by joining in the prayers and praises according so perfectly with her desires. More and more she loved and appreciated our beautiful service, assured that she should never tire of it, never cease to discover in it new beauties, and to receive fresh healing from its words of comfort.

For a while her love of the service was the only acknowledged attraction to the Church. She believed that she could attend the chapel and feed upon the bread of its little flock without going farther, or wishing to. She need not turn Episcopalian, and should not merit the name simply because she frequented their house of worship. But a spirit of inquiry had been awakened in her active mind, a desire for the truth it was not easy to subdue. In the chaos of conflicting doctrines she had cried out despairingly for "the faith once delivered to the saints;" and her longing eyes had turned back

to the glorious morning of the apostolic Church, and she beheld the beautiful temple founded by the Master Builder upon the eternal rock. Had hell prevailed against her in the warring strife and schismatic confusion? were the towers still reaching heavenward, her warriors glistening in the burnished armor of the Lord? Where was she—this fair Pillar of the Truth? So questioned the lost, bewildered child; and groping she went out on her search, and behold the Angel of the Lord took her by the hand.

Deeply and devoutly she investigated the subject dwelt upon in her conversation with Mr. Bellamy in our last chapter. Nor did she give it a partial investigation, a "one-sided view." She visited Dr. Ranney's library again, and furnished herself with books of his recommendation, accepting gratefully as well the aid Mr. Bellamy proffered. But the conviction came home to her, in reward for the study, that the claims of the Episcopal Church to apostolic foundation were greater, by far, than any other society could produce. Unwillingly she admitted those claims, and with the hope that her father, if he would not recognize them, would be able to overthrow and demolish them entirely. Yet, had it not been for her affection for him, and her respect for his cherished views, she would not have paused where she did, afraid to advance, and unwilling to retreat. It was this conflict in

her mind which made her wretched. Would the pastures of the true fold be sweet enough to yield her any repose, if her father frowned upon her from without? Was her wisdom superior to his, that she should discover truth in what he had repudiated as false? Like a good child, she resolved to send him a long letter when she could, and sometimes she dreaded and sometimes longed for the answer it would bring.

She went often to the Rectory. The charm of that happy fireside soothed and composed her. The laughing of the children dispelled her gloomy dejection, and the mother's loving sympathy never failed. She talked little, even with Mr. Bellamy, upon the topics heavily weighing upon her mind, but she could not conceal from him her unrest. He did all in his power to comfort and aid her, and that without a show of proselytizing zeal. Sometimes, in her despondency, she was ready to accuse him of indifference as to what she rejected or received in the building up of her faith. He spared no pains in answering her inquiries—leading her, whenever she put out her hand to be led—and that with a grateful affection she felt unworthy to receive. But he never thrust his guidance upon her, driving her to walk in his own path by mightily blocking up her own.

When it was known by Mrs. Timmons and her associate teachers, that Miss Ryland was a

daily attendant at St. Paul's—that she not only accompanied Miss Seabury thither, but joined devoutly in the service, their anxiety and consternation were extreme; but their expostulations with Agnes were unavailing, for she considered them as interfering where they were not authorized to dictate. She should be guided by her own sense of right and duty, and satisfied with the commendation of her conscience. Miss Lacy, finding her tears and entreaties of no effect, secretly despatched another long, closely-written letter to Dr. Ryland.

Agnes wrote often to her Aunt Lottie, but made no mention of the subject uppermost in her mind. She knew too well the jealousy with which her father had ever guarded their affection, his watchful superintendence lest the influence of Aunt Lottie's saintly life should draw her towards the Church of which she was a member, to subject her dear Aunt to the least suspicion from him, should she yet avow her belief in the faith of the Episcopal Church. Her letters to Aunt Lottie did not conceal the troubled state of her mind, but she said nothing of her interest in the Church, or of Mr. Bellamy, or the investigations her conversations with him had led her to pursue. Yet she knew there was not a heart in the wide world, that could comfort her more.

Carrie began to wish that the letters from

Boston would not come to Agnes any more, for they only made her sad and silent, and Carrie knew she lay awake for weeping every night after receiving one, and that she wept when she answered them; but they never talked upon the subject, or mentioned it, until one afternoon, when Agnes sat by Carrie's bedside, for Carrie had been quite ill all day, unable to leave her pillow. Agnes had read to her, sweet, dreamy rhymes from the poets she loved, and Carrie's eyelids had fallen so gently, and she lay so still, Agnes thought she was sleeping, and closing the book, took up the little pink tippet she was knitting for Allie Bellamy.

"I wonder," said Carrie, without lifting her heavy eyelids, and Agnes thought she was talking in her sleep, "what will become of me when I have to go away from you? All the world used to seem alike to me, and I didn't care into what corner they put me; but now I can't help dreading to go back into the old dark places again."

"Oh, you will find some one to love you," said Agnes, cheerfully.

"I never did," was the mournful reply, and she suddenly opened her eyes and fixed them intently upon Agnes' face; "I never found any one but you."

"That was because you lived so secluded and alone. According to your own story, Carrie,

you shut yourself apart from everybody and every thing. You must do differently when you go back; you must push out into the sunshine more."

"It isn't sunshine," was the half fretful reply. "Solitude is better than society we hate. I would rather sit in my little attic chamber there at Aunt Gregory's, and look out of its back window, day after day, and see nothing but the black roofs and smoky chimneys, than to be perched up on the parlor sofa to simper and sigh as Lucy and Bella do; I wish there was some other home for me in this great world"—and a tear rushed down her feverish cheek. "They don't want me there, and I don't want to be there; but what can I do? I have nowhere else to go. Do you know, Aggie, I have thought sometimes, I would be a Sister of Charity, if it were not for leaving our Church. I don't see what I can do in the world, unless I join some sisterhood or society, that will give me a home and labor to do."

"Now, Carrie, this will never do," said Agnes, laying down her knitting, and taking the two hot little hands within her own. She saw that the child's heart was rapidly filling with sorrow—that she was giving place to a despondency she could not easily shake off—and that to talk seriously with her would not avert the coming tempest. "I should think you might

conjure up a brighter picture than a nunnery cell," and she kissed the wet eyes, "or than ending your days in your aunt's attic chamber. Why, if some one does not carry you off to build a delightful home-nest—which I prophesy will come to pass one of these days—I shall compel you to add to the charms of my own fire-side."

Then the dimples showed themselves in Carrie's cheeks.

"But what if your husband will not have an old maid in his chimney-corner? I don't believe he will consent to."

"Oh yes, he will," replied Agnes with happy eyes. "It is just as easy to dream of my having a model husband and home some day, and that you will share my felicity, as to conjure up a black picture of living a solitary life in some dismal place, with no one to drink a cup of tea with me. If such things are to happen, we can cheat ourselves of prolonging them at least by anticipation."

"No one could conjure up a picture of you an old maid, Aggie."

"I am able to do it myself, sometimes," she replied, with a gayety that did not hide her seriousness.

"You never will be an old maid—I know you never will."

"Are you sure?" asked Agnes, abstractedly,

dropping her eyes upon her work ; their joyousness had suddenly faded out.

It was Carrie's turn to restore cheerfulness.

"Of course I am sure. You will have as many lovers as the fair ladies in the old story-books, and you will love one of them most truly, far above all the rest, and marry him, no matter how poor he may be."

"Did you know that my Aunt Lottie is unmarried?"

"Yes, you told me so. But she had a lover once, I know. He is dead, is he not?"

"I do not know. I have not heard her speak of him for several years. It is some time ago since she told me about it; he was living then, at the South somewhere."

"How strange!" murmured Carrie; "did they love each other very much?"

"Very much." After a pause, in which the deep springs of her feelings swelled nigh to bursting, she added, in a tremulous voice:

"There is nothing sadder in this world, Carrie, than to love purely and devotedly one unworthy of our affection, and have that love fully returned."

Carrie pondered her words in silence. "Perhaps it is because I am so poor in love, I cannot understand you. How are we to see the unworthiness of the object of our affections? Our love would cover every imperfection, or excuse

it, or hope for its cure. How did your Aunt Lottie see that he was unworthy of her? and even then, how could she consent to their separation?"

"She underwent a severe struggle when she gave him up; but her choice lay between her God and him."

"I cannot see how that could have been."

"She was a sincere Christian, wholly dedicated to her Master's service. He was not only an unbeliever, but a scoffer at Christianity, and employed every means to overthrow her faith, and lead her to agree with him. He was a man of superior intellect, and a powerful will. She knew that to 'go with him' was to relinquish her Christian faith, for her love would not long consent to their wide variance with each other; and hers was the will to bend, not his."

"Could you have done it, Aggie? I know I should not have been strong enough. I should have married him. We can't tell what God will help us to do. Would you have given him up, Aggie?"

Lower and lower Agnes bent over her work; but unable to restrain her feelings, she hid her face in her hands. Carrie drew her head tenderly upon her pillow, and winding her arms about her neck, said she was sorry for having made her talk of what grieved her so sorely. She had been thoughtless in questioning her.

Agnes sobbed awhile in Carrie's embrace. All day those tears had been trying to fall, and for many days before, and it was difficult to force them back when they had once broken way.

"I might have known," said Carrie, reproaching herself severely, "that your Aunt Lottie's troubles are your own, and that it is like tearing open an old wound to be made to talk of them. There are a great many things, in my experience, I can never speak of without crying, and I have thought persons very unfeeling for mentioning them to me."

"Do not blame yourself any more, Carrie, for there is no reason why you should. I have been trying to tell you something for a long time past, but I could not. I think I can tell you now."

The twilight and the dark came in unnoticed while Agnes lay on Carrie's pillow, revealing to her the secret of her unhappy heart. She loved Roscoe Field, she dared not think how much, when remembering her Aunt Lottie's sacrifice. She had promised to be his wife, and when she made that promise, she had little thought of breaking it.

"And are you thinking now of doing such a dreadful thing?" asked Carrie, raising her eyes from the little miniature with a soft rebuke. "I like his face very much, and I believe he is worthy of you, Aggie."

"I wish you knew him, Carrie. You would not wonder at my loving him; but if you should hear him talk of Christianity"—her voice trembled—"you would not wish me to marry him."

"Does he scoff at it, as your Aunt Lottie's lover did?"

"I think their characters very much alike. Roscoe would not willingly wound my feelings; he does not know how much pain he gives me, yet he will never be satisfied with my entertaining sentiments that he holds in such contempt. He is a scholar and an able logician, and so firmly established in his opinions, I need never hope to convince him of his error, but tremble rather for the effect upon me were I under his constant influence. He would never rest while there was this difference between us. He has already commenced the work of 'unblinding me,' as he terms it, and I cannot meet him with any thing he does not overthrow."

"How sad it is," said sympathizing Carrie. "It does not seem that it would be right for you to marry him; and yet, how can you give him up? Perhaps God will change his heart before you become his wife. I would not break the engagement, but wait for that change to come. You must never take back that promise, Aggie, while you love him."

"Aunt Lottie has waited these thirty years—

she is old now, but a little this side of her grave. If her prayers did not avail, I have but little hope in mine."

"When were you to be married?"

"Next autumn. It would crush his heart, Carrie, if he knew my hesitation. He writes so hopefully upon the subject, and I cannot say a word in reply. He chided my silence in his last, bidding me write of nothing else in the next long letter I send him. He is impatient to get me away from this 'Presbyterian nunnery,' as he calls it; and, in reply to a letter I wrote him one night, when heavy-hearted from this lack of faith, he only urged me to obtain father's consent to return home as soon as possible, and then he dwelt upon the unhappy influence the 'orthodox religion' of the day exerts upon a temperament like mine. He gives me no comfort, and therefore nothing can."

"What does your Aunt Lottie tell you to do?"

"Leave all to God. I believe her example is set before me as a guide in this dark place. I know she did right, just as God would have had her to do; but mine is a weak, child heart compared with hers."

"'God is the Protector of all that trust in him,'" replied Carrie, in the words of the Collect; "'without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy.' Trust in Him, Aggie; leave all to

Him, as your Aunt Lottie says, and every thing will come out right in the end. I begin to believe, Aggie, that all persons have trouble of their own, as great to them as mine is to me. I used to envy you sometimes, thinking you had nothing to make your heart ache."

"And I have envied you, Carrie, more than once."

"Me, Aggie? envied me? you are not in earnest."

"Truly I am; yours is not, by a great deal, the most unenviable lot in the world. Never give way to discontent, Carrie, dear, while you are blessed with a faith sure and steadfast, and the peace surpassing all understanding."

"I will be thankful," said Carrie, after a pause, kissing the face that nestled close to hers. "I am sorry I murmured as I did; I must try and remember Uncle Tim, an old negro beggar who appeals to Aunt Gregory's charity sometimes; he is blind and lame, and has neither home nor kindred, and yet he is always happy. Aunt Gregory asked him, one day, how he could be happy when he had not the first thing to make him so. 'Oh, Missus, you forgets, you forgets,' said he, with his old smile, 'that nothing should make me unhappy since Christ died to save me.'"

"A good lesson for us all," said Agnes, "but you are talking too much, and I fear I have been

unwise in encouraging you. Your pulse is quick and your forehead very hot. I hope you are not going to be sick."

"I must not be," replied Carrie; then she added, in a half whisper, clasping Agnes' hand tightly as she spoke, "yet I am almost afraid of these symptoms. If I remember, they are much the same as those I had before that dreadful fever a few years ago. I was close to death's gate then, Aggie. I have been sorry, many times, I did not pass through; but God held me back."

"Are you feeling much worse than you did at noon?" asked Agnes, with anxiety.

"I can hardly tell, my heart is so much lighter than it was an hour ago. It was heavy then, and I did not think of any thing else. This pain in my temples is very severe."

"You must take your medicine again," said Agnes, instantly arising and lighting the lamp. She was concerned at the change that had taken place in Carrie's appearance. She administered the medicine, fearing Carrie was suffering more than she revealed. She quickly decided to send for the Doctor and for Mrs. Timmons. Carrie remonstrated a little, but at last consented.

Mrs. Timmons hastened to the sick girl, and bent over her with a mother's tenderness. She was alarmed by her symptoms, and commended Agnes' despatch in sending for Dr. Haley. She ordered a few simple remedies which could do

no harm, and might be productive of much good, and did not leave the bedside until after Dr. Haley's visit and departure. He said that Carrie was threatened with fever, but thought its progress could be easily checked; approved of what had already been done for her, and instructing Agnes in regard to the medicines which he prescribed, he left, advising the patient to obtain slumber if possible.

When Carrie was at last asleep Agnes withdrew from the bedside, and seating herself at her writing-desk, took out her portfolio, and selected a letter therefrom, which she spread open before her. Lastly, she drew the little locket from her bosom, gazed long and earnestly upon the beloved face, then kissed it tenderly, and dropped her head upon the letter God must help her answer that night.

At ten o'clock, when Carrie's feverish slumber was broken by an increase of pain, she saw Agnes sealing an envelope, and she read in her face the struggle she had passed through and the triumph she had achieved.

"Have you followed Aunt Lottie's example, Aggie?"

"I have told him I shall wait." Her face was colorless as marble, and it cost her a painful effort to speak.

"Heaven help you, Aggie! Have you written to your father and your Aunt Lottie?"

"Yes, I have written to both. Father will be home soon, I hope."

"Is it morning, Aggie?"

"Oh no, child; the clock struck ten not five minutes ago. I am glad you have slept."

Carrie waited until the letters were sealed and laid away before she said any thing more, and then she softly added:

"Will you read a verse or two and a prayer for me, Aggie? I would like to hear the twenty-third Psalm, and then if you will read the prayer of Bishop Ken's, from my *Horæ Sacre*—the one to be offered at the commencement of sickness—perhaps I can go to sleep again."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEST OF FAITH.

"It is certainly very strange," muttered Ellen Butler, impatiently, shutting herself again within her chamber, when satisfied that Tom had brought no letter for her. She had not only interrogated him until his Hibernian temper was sorely tried, but had insisted upon reading the addresses of the whole package. No one could recollect the time when Ellen Butler had expected a letter, and her sudden anxiety and evident irritation at meeting a disappointment was observed and commented upon by her associates.

"It is indeed very strange," she repeated, in a peevish tone, as she threw herself down upon the window-seat, like a moody child; "it is high time the letter came, if I am to receive one; it should have been here yesterday, at the farthest; a little later and it will be too late."

For a while she sat thinking, revealing her mind's unrest by the nervous beating of her foot upon the floor and her assiduous twirling and swinging of the curtain-cord. Hearing approaching footsteps in the hall, she sprang forward and locked the door, and gave no answer to the loud

and continued rapping. She walked up and down the room for some time, and then suddenly pausing before her table, lighted her candle, for it was nearly dark, and seating herself, began rapidly to cover a sheet of letter-paper with her quaint, crooked chirography. She was but a few moments in filling several pages. As she wrote, her face wore an almost malignant frown, and her lips were tightly compressed. She had sealed and directed the letter, when she heard a bounding footstep on the stairs, which she knew to be Mollie Raymond's. Quickly concealing her writing materials, and slipping the finished letter into her pocket, she unlocked the door before her room-mate reached it, and was bending over her slate with a studious abstraction, seemingly unmindful of Mollie's hasty entrance.

Mollie closed the door behind her with considerable force, yet Ellen neither started nor looked up, nor did the sound of her pencil cease when the light little figure swept past her impetuously, and threw herself upon the bed with an outburst of bitter weeping. It was not until Mollie called on her, in a broken and stifled voice, that she appeared conscious of her presence.

"Well, what is it Mollie?" and she glanced furtively to where the child was lying with her face buried in the pillows.

"Oh, I am wretched, Ellen, most miserably

wretched! It is all just as I expected, just as I knew it would be, if I wrote to father any thing about it."

"Have you heard from him?" asked Ellen, breathlessly, laying aside her book and slate, and seating herself quietly by the bedside.

"Yes, the letter arrived to-night, and I have just read it. I would rather never have heard from him than to receive such orders."

"Hush, child—be careful."

"But I mean it, Ellen Butler, indeed I do—for it has made me more miserable than any thing else in the world could. I knew it would do no good to write to my father, and I told you so—he is cold and proud; thinking of nothing but to see me, some day, the wife of a man as rich as himself. But I will never marry any one but Frederick,—I never, never will—"

"Hush, hush, child; do not say too much while you are so excited. What did your father write?" asked Ellen.

"Enough to make me regret I followed your advice in laying the matter before him. You do not know him as well as I do, Ellen Butler, or you would never have urged me to such a rash venture. He positively forbids my inviting Prof. Cartzen to accompany me home; thus refusing the opportunity of forming an acquaintance with the professor, before deciding, where my happiness is at stake. He commands me to

break off instantly all intimacy and intercourse with him; and more than all"—here Mollie's strong feeling so overcame her, it was some time before she could proceed—"he has ordered me to return home without delay. Oh, Ellen! see what you have done—you have made me unhappy for life."

Ellen bit her lips, and was silent. At last she said:

"What are you going to do, Mollie?"

Mollie continued to weep most passionately, and made no reply. Ellen waited patiently until the intensity of her grief had subsided, then calmly repeated the inquiry.

"I shall marry him, Ellen Butler," and the excited girl rose up suddenly, looking firm defiance into the pale but unmoved face that was watching her. "I love him, and it is my duty to go with him. Nothing on earth shall induce me to give him up. I owe no further obedience to my unfeeling father. Had I not asked his consent, I should not now be driven to a direct violation of his commands; I know what my duty is, I see it plainly. I shall go with Frederick."

"When?" asked Ellen, clasping her hands rigidly together.

"You need not attempt to oppose me any longer, Ellen Butler, or to restrain me in any course I choose to take. This is my own affair. The happiness or misery of no one else is con-

cerned in it. My own heart shall dictate my future actions; I do not fear the result."

"You will write again to your father?" There was more of command than interrogation in Ellen's words.

"I shall never ask his consent a second time, for that would be useless: neither shall I leave it in his power to remove me, at his pleasure, from Barley Wood." Mollie's eyes flashed defiance, and she shook her head imperiously.

Ellen Butler rose to her feet, and planted herself firmly between Mollie and the door. Mollie looked frightened and defeated, as she studied Ellen, who stood there with folded arms, her mouth set in the invincible determination it could so forcibly express. She felt herself a prisoner, and panted for escape.

"I tell you for a certainty," said Ellen, in an unshaken voice, inclining her head expressively toward her as she slowly uttered the words—"you shall not go with Prof. Cartzen; you shall not, without the consent of Mrs. Timmons, before whom this whole matter must be laid. You shall not leave this room even, until she has been made acquainted with the affair; and the responsibility thrown upon her, which I now bear alone."

"Oh, Ellen, how cruel—how cruel you are!" cried the unhappy girl, wringing her hands imploringly; "I thought you were my friend! I

have believed you to be; and now to be so sadly disappointed, when I most require your faithfulness! Only assist me this time—help me—do, Ellen, out of this difficulty; there is no reason why you should not.”

“How would you have me assist you,” asked Ellen, her voice softening; “surely not by aiding you to an elopement?”

“Oh, Ellen, do not inform Mrs. Timmons; I entreat you, do not,” and seizing Ellen’s hands she pressed them tightly in her own.

“I will promise you, upon one condition,” said Ellen, eyeing her keenly as she spoke, “and that is—before you take another step in this serious matter—before you even allow Prof. Cartzen another interview, without my knowledge, you shall acquaint your father with your decision, and await his answer.”

“Oh, Ellen, what a heartless exaction! You must think me mad, to consent to such a condition. My father would only take effectual measures to prevent our marriage; perhaps send me far away; or shut me up, where I could never see or hear from Frederick again.” She looked beseechingly through her tears, up into the unrelenting face. Suddenly, a deep crimson tide rushed to her forehead; and flinging Ellen’s hands from her, she sprang from the bed, with flashing eyes, and imperative mien, exclaiming—

“Ellen Butler, I would like to know who you

think yourself to be? You have no right whatever to interfere in my affairs to such an extent; and I will not submit to your control another hour. I request you to cease, from this moment, meddling with what does not concern you. I shall return to my old room to-night, and can well dispense with your further interest in my concerns—”

“Mollie Raymond!” interrupted Ellen, laying her hand upon the shoulder of the exasperated girl, and gazing earnestly into her flushed face, “you can say nothing which will change my determination in the least. It is not in your power to wound me deeply enough to arouse me to the bitterest revenge I could wreak upon you,—that of indifference to your conduct. You cannot drive me from my self-imposed guard over your reputation, nor weaken my resolution to prevent any rash act of yours, if in my power to accomplish it. And now I repeat what I have already said; I shall instantly repair to Mrs. Timmons, and tell her all; indeed, I believe that to be the course my duty dictates, unless you promise, most sacredly, to write to your father, and await his reply before taking another step.”

“You have no right to exact that of me,” said Mollie, a little subdued, seeing that opposition was worse than useless. “Why am I bound to make promises to you, Ellen Butler?”

“You are not,” replied Ellen, with serious

composure, turning from Mollie to the door. Mollie quickly caught her arm and restrained her—

“Yes, I will promise, Ellen,—promise any thing you wish, if you will not go to Mrs. Timmons;” and the child sighed as if her heart was broken.

“And that you will not again meet Prof. Cartzen, unknown to me?” added Ellen, her hand still upon the door knob.

Mollie hesitated: “I cannot see why you should require me to promise so much.”

“I do not; you have your free choice, Mollie.”

“Oh dear, how provoking you are! Yes, I will promise.”

Ellen searched her downcast face suspiciously, for she was ill at ease.

“A Christian’s promise is considered more reliable than that of another. Can I, Mollie, receive yours as such? shall I so regard it?”

“Why should you question me thus?” and the child burst into another fit of passionate weeping. “If you have no confidence in my truthfulness, of what value are all the promises I can make?”

“I will believe you, Mollie.” There was soothing tenderness in Ellen’s voice as she drew the unhappy girl within her arms and kissed her. “You will be grateful to me for this, some day.”

“Oh, no! I never shall! I know I never shall! You have made me wretched for life!”

Ellen still held her in close embrace; then whispered, huskily:

“If there is a God who hears your prayers, and can comfort you in distress, now, if ever, is the time for you to call upon Him for support and guidance.”

Mollie said nothing, but continued to sob bitterly. Ellen clasped her closer in her arms.

“When do you expect to see Prof. Cartzen again?”

“I think he will be here to-morrow; probably in the morning. He is anxious to know what the reply of my father really is; he has had so little hope of obtaining his consent that he was grieved at my consulting him before our marriage. Oh, Ellen, you do not know how devotedly he loves me! He will never desert me; I have hope and confidence in that.”

“That is Agnes Ryland’s step,” said Ellen, as she listened to some one ascending the stairs. “She is coming in here, no doubt. Smooth your hair, Mollie, and look as cheerful as you can.”

But Mollie felt no inclination to make the effort, and threw herself back upon the bed, burying her face in the pillow.

Agnes’ mind was too oppressively occupied to observe her. “Do come down stairs, Ellen, and sit with me awhile,” she said, taking her hand

and drawing her gently into the hall. "Carrie is much worse this evening. She is asleep now; but she moans, and talks so deliriously in her slumber, that I cannot endure watching alone by her bedside. Dear child, she bears her sufferings with a patience I never saw equalled. I am afraid, Ellen"—and Agnes' voice faltered and failed—she could not express that terrible fear.

"What did the physician say about her?" asked Ellen, quickly following her friend; "he has just been here, has he not?"

"He said there would be a change about midnight, for better or worse. He has promised to be with us then. I wish he was here now."

As they entered the apartment, and stole softly to the bedside, Carrie awoke. The faint, sweet smile that flitted across her pale face, as she glanced from one sympathizing countenance to another, showed she recognized them. She groaned involuntarily, and tossed about restlessly upon her pillow. No sooner had Agnes seated herself beside her than she grasped her hand and drew her down to her lips.

"Aggie, I am very sick to-night; yet I have had a sweet dream. I thought it was all over—this pain was ended."

"I wish you could sleep again, darling." She kissed the hot forehead, wetting it with her tears. "Is there any thing we can do for you?—any thing?"

"Nothing to remove this pain, Aggie." She closed her eyes heavily, and for a moment her face was convulsed with the agony she was enduring. Tears gushed suddenly from beneath her eyelashes; but she did not allow them to flow unrestrained. Agnes and Ellen gazed at each other with speechless dread. Carrie began to whisper, and they both bent over her to listen.

"And the inhabitants shall no more say I am sick. . . . God himself shall be with them, and be their God; He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain."

A heavenly radiance fell upon her wasted features, and her lips continued moving, but Agnes and Ellen were unable to catch the sound.

"Would it not be advisable to call Mrs. Timmons?" asked Agnes, her face pale with concern. "She has been with us for some time this afternoon and evening, and is now suffering from a severe headache; but she left a special request to be called if there was any material change."

"No, no; do not call her," said Carrie, suddenly opening her eyes. "She could not help me; let her rest. Nothing can help me now but this trust in my Saviour; and oh, it is sweet and precious. 'Yea, though I walk through the

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.' Oh, Ellen, we realize the value of faith in Christ when we come to lie here."

Ellen covered her face with her hands, and Carrie sank into a broken, delirious slumber, during which the watchers exchanged neither looks nor words. Each was too absorbed—too oppressed with the nameless, unspeakable awe ever pervading a chamber into which we feel that death is possibly stealing—to remember the presence of any save the sufferer and the dreaded, unseen messenger. The great old house was silent throughout. Occasionally a step, creaking on the stairs, betrayed a passage through its halls. The bells had not been rung that day; and, had the physician permitted it, every pupil at Barley Wood would have visited Carrie's sick-room. Carrie had sometimes caught the sound of their suppressed whispers as they clustered around the door, anxiously awaiting the return of some messenger who could tell them how she was; and, had her wishes been gratified, she would have seen them and have pressed the hand of each. It was, however, Dr. Haley's advice that his patient should be kept quiet, receiving the attention of but two or three of her friends, and all excitement carefully avoided. Agnes was an experienced nurse, and had shown

an entire forgetfulness of self in her faithfulness to Carrie.

The clear, silvery tones of the great Seminary clock, as it struck the hour of ten, awoke Carrie from the troubled sleep in which she had obtained a short respite from pain. Her eyes instantly and eagerly sought the face of Agnes, and rested there affectionately.

"Can we do any thing for you?" repeated Agnes. "I cannot bear to see you suffer so much without an effort to relieve you."

"Oh, how much I wish that Mr. Bellamy was here."

"I will go for him if you wish it," said Ellen, instantly springing to her feet.

Carrie's heavy eyes brightened. "But it will be too much trouble to you;" said she, "it is a long walk to the Rectory, Ellen;" and her voice fell disappointedly as she added, "besides it is very late. I forgot it was night, although it seems to me a very long time since it was morning."

"The walk is nothing, and I do not at all mind the lateness of the hour. Have you any special message to send?"

"Oh, Ellen! I am so thankful to you for this kindness! Tell Mr. Bellamy I am much worse to-night; that I would not ask him to come to me now, did I not think it probable he may never pray for me again; and if I go to-night, as I think likely I shall, I want my soul lifted

up on the prayers of the Church. And tell him—do not cry so, Ellen—I am happy; tell him I desire to partake once more of the precious Body and Blood of my Saviour Christ.”

Ellen hurried away to perform her errand. She could easily have obtained a companion for her walk; but she chose to go alone; and so quickly did she speed on her way, that to Carrie, even, to whom the leaden moments seemed hours, her absence occasioned no impatience.

Carrie was moaning, and tossing in acute pain, when Mr. Bellamy entered, and gently approaching her pillow, laid his hand upon her burning brow, whispering a prayer and benediction. Instantly, the suffering girl composed herself, and in feeble, broken accents endeavored to express her joyful gratitude for his presence.

“All is peace,” said she, a happy smile lighting up her wan features; “a peace, this pain cannot distract, or death destroy.”

Mr. Bellamy seated himself beside her, administering soothing words of Christian hope, and comforting assurances of divine aid, to which she listened with an eagerness undiminished by her painful illness. Then he brought forth the Communion service, and placed it upon the little table Agnes had drawn to the bedside, and covered with a fair linen cloth,—on which also lay Carrie’s well-worn Prayer-

Book. Ellen Butler withdrew to the darkest corner of the chamber, and silently surveyed the solemn scene, with thoughts and emotions never before experienced. The serenity and faith of that simple child, as her feet drew near to the dark, chilling valley—her vision of the happy rest awaiting her—her implicit confidence in the support of an unseen arm, spoke to Ellen’s unbelief in a voice she could neither suppress nor resist, and it was a “still small voice” which thus powerfully aroused her,—the remembrance of Carrie’s quiet life and ways; her unobtrusive yet unyielding faith; her piety, which revealed itself in the everyday occurrences of her common-place existence, rather than trumpeted its pharisaical perfections where it might be seen of men. There was not a pupil in the Seminary, whose religious profession, if she made any, had been thrust less upon Ellen’s notice; no one who had conversed with her so seldom on religious subjects; yet none but Carrie had touched and softened her stony heart at the last.

To Agnes, the administration of the Sacrament to the sick was something new, and more in accordance with her views of that ordinance than the strict confining of the elements within the walls of the meeting-house had been. It was a subject upon which she had reflected long before this time. It had impressed her mind

deeply a few years before, when her father had objected to administering the Communion to a dying woman. Agnes had ever considered it the most sublime mystery of religion, and fittest for those who were by sickness put into a heavenly frame and brought nearest to perfection; as God's seal of remission to all who receive it with penitence and faith, and a support against the fear of death, by setting Jesus before them,—His precious Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Ascension. She knew not how it could, with propriety, be withheld; and in the importance which the Episcopal Church attaches to its administration to the sick and dying, she found something to admire and love.

"You have not told me," said Mr. Bellamy, addressing Carrie, "whether there is one to communicate with you, or not. The Church requires that there shall be two at least. Undoubtedly there are those in the house who would rejoice to partake of the Sacrament. Have you invited any one?"

"I have not," replied Carrie, regretfully. "I was too sick to think of it."

"Mrs. Timmons will be glad to come in," said Agnes, rising; "she has not yet retired. Whom else shall I ask, Carrie? Lucy Donald would, I think, be grateful for the opportunity."

"Ask her, by all means; but Aggie, dear Aggie!" and tears started from her beseeching

eyes, as she looked up tenderly into the sad countenance of her dearest friend. "Why can't you? There is nothing to prevent you, and it would make me very happy."

Agnes looked inquiringly at Mr. Bellamy, who was regarding her with the deepest interest. Her soul went longingly forth at Carrie's request. Was there any just cause why she should not improve so hallowed an opportunity to feed her famished soul upon the food it had long hungered for?

"There is no reason, Miss Ryland," said Mr. Bellamy, "why you may not partake, if your heart is right in the sight of God. You are a member of Christ by baptism, and if you 'do truly, and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways; draw near with faith and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.'"

Agnes thought seriously and with prayer, for a few moments; then she bent down to Carrie's expectant face and whispered her decision. She was leaving the room to call Mrs. Timmons and Lucy Donald, when Ellen bade her remain with Carrie, and she would go for them herself. Agnes returned, and fell humbly upon her knees at Carrie's bedside.

The holy Sacrament had been administered

in the beautiful and appropriate form, which did not fail to impress deeply the minds of those who witnessed it for the first time. Not one of that little company had been more thoroughly absorbed, or more solemnly influenced by its tearful observance than Ellen Butler, who, when it was over, and Mrs. Timmons and Lucy Donald had withdrawn, left her seat in the dark corner, and stepping to the window, where the light fell clearly from the shaded lamp, stood fixedly with her forehead pressed against the pane, straining her eyes with a wistful, dissatisfied, and restless gaze into the darkness. There was no sound within, save Carrie's heavy breathing and fitful moaning, as she sank under the influence of a powerful anodyne; the ticking of Agnes' watch, which lay upon the table; and Mr. Bellamy's whispered prayers, as he watched anxiously by the pillow of that cherished lamb of his little fold. From without, in the starless night, came the dismal sound of the cracking of the ice in the pools on the common, the low wailing of the pines, and the distant crowing of cocks. There was an oppressive dreariness in it all, harmonizing with the melancholy of her soul. There was a burning thirst for some draught yet untasted and unfound; a loathing dissatisfaction with the past; a shrinking dread of the future; and a fierce and bitter cry from sunless depths for peace—God's peace.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRUITS OF THE REVIVAL.

CARRIE was asleep. Mr. Bellamy exchanged a few words with Agnes, and noiselessly left the room. As he passed through the lower hall, the clock struck one. He was opening the heavy, creaking door as softly as possible, when he heard a light, rapid step following him, and beheld the serious girl who had sat statue-like in the corner of Carrie's sick-room. Her face was deadly pale, and seizing his arm with a frantic clutch, she hurried through the door, never pausing for an explanation until they were outside of the building.

"Is Miss Seabury worse?" he inquired.

"No—no—but you must help me. We must not stop an instant, or we shall be too late. One of the young ladies has just left the Seminary, to elope with a man who will prove her ruin. The cars leave in less than a half hour; they took a carriage; we must make haste;" and she hurried him down the steps and was seated in his carriage before he could make another inquiry. She was bareheaded, and had but a light shawl thrown loosely about her.

"It will not do for you to expose yourself thus

to the cold," he said, almost doubting her sanity. "Go back and dress yourself warmly—we will have time enough."

"No; we will not," was the firm reply. "I can wrap myself in the wolf-robe, and tie my handkerchief over my head. I should have put on a bonnet and shawl, but could not without alarming Aggie, and it would have taken time to go up to my room. Pray, make haste, Mr. Bellamy, for if we are too late, Mollie must answer bitterly for her rashness."

He sprang to his seat beside her and urged forward his horse at a rapid rate, Ellen relating to him, meanwhile, sufficient regarding Prof. Cartzen and Mollie, to convince him of the true character of the man, and arouse him to the rescue of the blinded girl, if possible. He had not met the professor during his protracted stay in the village, although he had heard him extolled to a degree which had not led him to anticipate such a dishonorable exit.

"I have believed him to be an impostor from the beginning," said Ellen, "and when I saw that he had marked out Mollie Raymond for his prey, I planted myself between them, to defend her, if possible. She did not know my plans, nor did he; but I have read theirs from the first, and thwarted and opposed them. They should not have baffled me to-night, had I not foolishly trusted to Mollie's promise."

"I am surprised at your hesitancy in revealing every thing to Mrs. Timmons. Her regard for the professor, even, would not have led her to countenance their intimacy in opposition to Mr. Raymond's wishes."

"I know that; but I was determined to do more than merely prevent their marriage. I was waiting for evidence with which openly to expose this 'wolf in sheep's clothing;' otherwise, I should only have been blamed for interference. He boasts of belonging to an old, aristocratic family of New Haven, and claims that for his native place. I ascertained from the best authority that if a man of his name ever resided there, all remembrance of him is now extinct, as well as of his old aristocratic family. I also wrote to the settlement where he said his mission was located; but the answer has not yet come. I expected it to-day, and was vexed beyond measure at the disappointment. I have sent another letter, and am confident what the report from that quarter will be."

When the lights of the little depot were in sight, and they heard the puffing of the engine, and the confusion preceding the departure of the train, Ellen became highly excited, and urged the horse to greater speed.

"There is their carriage!" she huskily whispered, when they drew up in the shadow of a large warehouse, a few steps from the depot.

"I know it is the same, for the horses are white. Yes, and there they are—can they escape us? are we too late?"

Mr. Bellamy closely observed the gentleman and lady who left the carriage and hurried into the cars. Then he looked at his watch, with, what seemed to poor Ellen, unwise deliberation.

"The cars will leave in eight minutes. You are sure these are they?"

"Yes; perfectly sure. Mollie wears a crimson shawl, and the professor a plaid scarf."

"You must remain here in the carriage," said Mr. Bellamy, calmly and firmly. "I shall succeed better without you than with you. Be as composed as possible, and mind and not expose yourself to the cold."

Ellen sat down mechanically in the seat, and drew the wolf-robe tightly about her. Never, in all her tumultuous life, had she experienced such distracting anxiety. She strained her eyes after Mr. Bellamy, as he rapidly proceeded towards the depot, and disappeared within the car. Then she shut them tight, dreading to open them again.

It seemed to her as if the morning would break while she sat there, so interminable were those moments of suspense. The quick, shrill ringing of the engine-bell stunned her heart, silencing her faint hope; and when the train

went screaming past, she was nearly bereft of consciousness in her despair. Would he never come? She wished she had faith to pray.

It was a loud, hysterical cry, followed by peal after peal of laughter, that made Ellen start up suddenly, her blood freezing in her veins. Mr. Bellamy was approaching with Mollie struggling in his arms.

"Get out and untie the horse," he said, stepping into the carriage with his burden. "He is perfectly gentle."

Ellen quickly and silently obeyed, hardly conscious of what she was doing.

"Drive to my house," he continued—then added in an under-tone, "she must not go back to the Seminary in this condition. For her sake, we will conceal the matter, if possible."

It was not until Mollie Raymond was lying upon Mrs. Bellamy's bed, in a quiet slumber produced by a sleeping-draught, that Ellen was acquainted with what had transpired at the depot. The car was thinly occupied, and Prof. Cartzen had selected a seat at the end, behind the other passengers. He was cheerfully talking to Mollie, endeavoring to stimulate her sinking spirits, when Mr. Bellamy's entrance and approach, threw him into apparent alarm and uneasiness. He sprang to his feet to make good his cowardly retreat, when the strong arm of the rector was laid upon him, and he authoritatively bidden to

explain his conduct. He made a poor attempt at assuming the air of an insulted gentleman, stammered and trembled; and when Mollie fell into a fainting fit, and Mr. Bellamy thought but of assisting her, adroitly effected his escape from the car. Mr. Bellamy's first impulse was to raise an alarm, and start a pursuit, but seeing the impostor had not taken their baggage, which consisted but of a well-filled travelling-bag—and having been informed by Ellen that Miss Raymond was out of funds at the time, he decided, for the sake of the unfortunate girl, to make no outcry whatever. He had but a moment to decide what course to pursue, as the cars were on the point of leaving. Lifting Mollie tenderly in his arms, he carried her out, bidding a staring porter, who stood upon the platform, to get her travelling-bag and bring it speedily to his house, where Ellen examined it, and was relieved on finding it contained Mollie's jewelry and other articles of value.

When poor Mollie's delirious song and laughter were hushed in a slumber, which promised to be unbroken until the morning, Ellen insisted that all should retire to rest—if rest were possible, after such a scene—leaving Mollie in her care. It was yet an hour or more to daybreak; what a long, long night it had been.

And as Ellen sat by that bedside, listening to the same dismal sounds from without, which

had helped to oppress her as she stood gazing from the window of Carrie Seabury's sick-chamber, she felt her load to be far heavier, her need far sorer than then. "Why?" questioned she with fate, as she looked upon the blanched face before her, and prophesied the misery, the wreck there would be at the first conscious awakening, and then recalled the sweet calm of another face, the angel serenity of her who might already have passed unterrified beyond the fearful portal—"why," questioned she, "is this contrast thrust before me? Why must I sit here to draw comparisons between the religious professions of the two, and the results of the tests to which they were subjected? What to me is the sincerity of the one or the deception of the other? Every thing is a cheat, and happy is he who swallows the pill without tasting the bitter. Carrie Seabury may be—may *have been*—duped like the rest. No; I must doubt it."

Mr. Bellamy sent for Mrs. Timmons early the next morning. She was overcome by the astounding intelligence. She had not been ignorant of the intimacy between Prof. Cartzen and her pupil; but holding him in high esteem, she had been pleased to encourage it. She knew not which grieved her the most: her disappointment in Prof. Cartzen—his base imposture—or poor Mollie's disgrace and misfortune! She was extremely humiliated and distressed. She

could not thank Mr. Bellamy, nor commend Ellen Butler, sufficiently. She did not blame Ellen for concealing the matter from her as long as she did; for without direct evidence of his falsity, she doubted if Ellen could have made her believe it. Ellen's explanation of the mysterious "acc of diamonds" had then a weight of importance. She, alone, could not have given it before.

"Mollie is awake now," said Ellen, entering the library where Mr. Bellamy and Mrs. Timmons were in earnest conversation. "She is much bewildered, yet seems more conscious of what has happened than we had reason to expect. She is very wretched, indeed."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Timmons, instantly rising. "I will see her alone a little while. Does she know I am here? Did she express a wish to see me?"

"She appears unwilling to see any one," replied Ellen. "When I told her you were here, she asked me to bring you in immediately; the next moment, she begged me not to do so. Perhaps you can soothe her. I hope you can. But tell me, how is Carrie Seabury? Is she—" Ellen could not speak the word.

"No; although we did not think to see her alive this morning. Dr. Haley came, not long after you left, and was with her until daybreak. He says the crisis is past, and that there is a

fair chance of her recovery. She was much easier when I left, and I heard her asking for you. Agnes knows not what to think of your abrupt departure last night."

"I was afraid it would trouble her; but I had no time for the least explanation. . . . Mollie is calling me. You go in my place. Persuade her, if you can, to return to the Seminary; she firmly declares she never will, but we cannot think of imposing longer on Mr. Bellamy's kindness."

It was not in Mrs. Timmons' charitable heart to meet Mollie with severe reproof; and even had she possessed a less womanly nature, she could not have chided her becomingly, for she had encouraged the intimacy, and her experienced eyes were more at fault than those of trusting seventeen, for being easily blinded and deceived.

Mollie did not spend her grief in passionate tears; there is hope for the relief of such. She lay in a sullen melancholy, gnawing her bloodless lips, and gazing vacantly at the ceiling. Her replies to Ellen had been broken and brief, betraying an irritability when she was pressed for an answer she did not choose to give; and, when Ellen ceased interrogating her, she had become forgetful of her presence, and muttered inaudibly to herself. She was looking eagerly towards the door when Mrs. Timmons entered; but, perceiving her, she instantly turned her face to the wall.

"My dear child," began Mrs. Timmons, sitting down beside her, and taking her hand, which was instantly withdrawn, "I do not come to reproach or blame you. I am truly sorry for you. That is all I would say to you now concerning this most unhappy affair. Turn over, and let me see your face. Are you sick this morning?"

Mollie did not move, or make the least reply.

"I think it would comfort us both to talk together," continued the gentle woman. "The Institution and myself must bear a great burden of this disgrace. We have been grossly deceived—all of us; but it is for some good purpose, I hope, though the lesson is a severe one. I want you to go back with me this morning. You shall occupy my room, and remain undisturbed as long as you wish. Will you go?"

Mollie replied briefly, like a vexed child, that she would not.

"But you cannot expect, my dear, to remain here in the house of a stranger, upon whose kindness you have no claim?"

"Where am I?" asked Mollie, staring about the room.

"At Mr. Bellamy's, the Episcopal clergyman's."

"Oh yes; I remember now. He will let me stay here. I shall not go back to Barley Wood."

"It is the fear of opprobrium, perhaps," continued the patient woman, "which leads you to refuse. None will be shown towards you, as this affair is a secret between Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy, Ellen Butler, you, and me. You may be confident we will not expose you."

"I do not care who knows it. I do not care if every one in the village points and laughs at me. You may tell every girl in the school, if you like, that I loved Professor Cartzen well enough to trust him as I did."

"And that you were 'far more sinned against than sinning,'" tearfully added Mrs. Timmons.

"No, not a word about his proving false, not a word. You need not defend me, nor defame him:" she spoke with more life and feeling than she had before. Pressing her hands upon her hot eyeballs, she murmured:

"What a horrible nightmare it has been—enough to craze me. Where did you say I am? Oh yes, at Mr. Bellamy's. I shall never forget him, or Ellen Butler. When I stepped into the car last night, I was wretched with wishing something would prevent our going."

"You must thank God for saving you in the miraculous manner he did."

Mollie gave a low, hysterical laugh.

"My eyes are opened to more deceptions than one. I may cheat others hereafter, but shall never dupe myself again. Don't talk to me

about giving thanks. I have had enough of the nonsense."

Mrs. Timmons was alarmed, thinking Mollie's delirium had returned. She took her wrist, and, trembling, felt her pulse. Mollie witnessed the movement, and instantly undeceived her.

"I am no worse, Mrs. Timmons; I know very well what I am saying. I don't wish you to talk to me about praying, or remind me of my late professions any oftener than is necessary. They are gone now—gone, like the froth they were; but the dregs they left are real and bitter."

"Do you deny, my dear child, that the grace of God has been at work in your heart?"

"There has been something at work there—something which crept in when I was too excited to reason, and it has whirled and driven me about ever since, until—" she sighed heavily—"here I am."

Mrs. Bellamy came in with Ellen's request to see Mrs. Timmons for a few moments in the library; she would sit with Miss Raymond in the mean while.

Ellen's eagerness to obtain the important letter she expected prompted her to send Charlie Bellamy to the office that morning as soon as the mail arrived. He had returned with a letter for her, and the one containing the information she expected. It was from the postmaster

of the little village, in whose immediate neighborhood Professor Cartzen had reported his flourishing mission to be situated, stating confidently that there was no such mission in that part of the Territory, and never had been, "in the memory of the oldest inhabitant." Professor Cartzen was entirely unknown to them; he had never resided in the township he claimed as his home.

Should they convey this intelligence to Mollie? Did she not already know the worst? Was it not best to acquaint her with the peril from which she had been narrowly rescued? So questioned Mr. Bellamy, Mrs. Timmons, and Ellen Butler together. Mrs. Timmons urged the revelation as a means of leading Mollie to an acknowledgment of God's overruling providence in the matter, and to humiliating herself once more before the mercy-seat. Mr. Bellamy thought the letter might help to alienate her heart from its worthless object, but attached no greater importance to it. Ellen considered Mollie as much prepared to receive the intelligence then as she ever would be, and advised the communication to be made as a means of hastening the settlement of her mind. She believed Mollie was yet undecided as to the true character of the professor, and that she would be in a ferment of hope and despair until convinced by facts of his baseness.

Mr. Bellamy went in alone, and told her the whole. She listened to him with strong calmness, neither denying nor doubting the statement. There was no outbreak of passionate grief, not even a sigh or tear. He was withdrawing from the room, when she said:

"Will you please ask Ellen Butler to write to father for me? I want to go home."

"We were talking upon that very subject a short time ago. I thought it best for her to write to your father, but she was unwilling to write without your consent."

"May I stay here until he comes for me? He will come soon, I am sure."

"Certainly, my dear Miss Raymond; we shall be glad to render you any comfort or assistance."

"You are very good to me," said Mollie. "Tell Ellen I must see her before she writes to father. Please to send her in immediately—the letter must go out to-night."

"What shall you write?" asked Mollie, when Ellen was seated, with her writing materials, beside her.

"I shall give him a brief, unvarnished account, one not freeing you from censure, but leaving room for his pardon and compassion."

"He will be very angry, but I do not dread his coming for me in the least. I shall not dread any thing after this. He idolizes me, Ellen, in his strange way; and you must expect

him to blame everybody connected with the Seminary as severely as he does me. But write the letter. I do not want to see it after it is finished. I may feel like tearing it up, and forbidding you to write to him. I wish I could lie here all alone the rest of the day."

Nearly a week elapsed before old Mr. Raymond arrived; and, as Mollie predicted, he expended his stormy displeasure upon every one pertaining to Barley Wood as freely as he did upon her, so vehemently reprimanding Mrs. Timmons, as he stood in the entrance hall of the Seminary—he would not enter further—that had the unhappy occurrence been kept secret, it would then have been distinctly published to every pupil in the house. But it had not remained a secret; it was impossible that it should. Before Mollie's departure from the village, it was broadly known, and each day rendered more interesting by the new developments made concerning the professor lately honored in their midst. His sudden departure, without bidding farewell to his friends, particularly those to whom he was pecuniarily bound, caused the first breath of distrust, which, when he did not return, or give his confiding friends a knowledge of his whereabouts, soon fanned the whole community into a blaze. His mysterious exit in the night, bearing with him considerable loans he had solicited that day, in behalf of his

mission, aroused the zealous brethren who had made them, on the most benevolent terms, to start in his pursuit. The energetic search revealed his last appearance at the depot, and awoke a rumor so detrimental to Mollie Raymond, that Mr. Bellamy came forward and stated the particulars of the case as fully as the circumstances demanded. For a few days the little village was boiling with excitement. Mrs. Leson had several tea-parties, and the Rectory was overrun with visitors; but Mollie would see no one but the rector's family and Ellen Butler, and it was impossible for the inquisitive to draw a word from Ellen's lips. From morning until night Mollie sat listless and alone, taking no heed of any thing that was passing, seemingly dead at heart.

CHAPTER XV.

FAREWELL TO BARLEY WOOD.

It was a few days after Mollie Raymond's departure for home, when the little village, having worn the story of the professor completely threadbare, was sinking into its old quiet again, that Carrie Seabury sat before the window, propped with pillows, and so lost in pleasant thought she was all forgetful of the presence of Agnes, who was sitting beside her, silently pondering over a letter she had just received.

"Carrie, father has written for me to come home."

Carrie was startled and pained. "Not before the close of the term, Aggie? It is six weeks now from vacation, you know."

"He writes for me to leave here at my earliest convenience, and limits my stay to the last of next week. He is absent from home now, but will return before that time."

"But you will come back, Aggie?" faltered Carrie, with quivering lips.

It was hard for Agnes to answer her.

"No, Carrie, I do not expect to return. He writes he is firmly convinced it is his duty to

remove me from this place, and trusts my studious ambition will not lead me to oppose him."

"What are his reasons? Do you know them?"

"No; and my conjectures are unsatisfactory. It may be he has heard some slanderous rumor against the Institution, growing out of Professor Cartzen's imposture, and he has given it credence. Or he may have heard of my attending your church, although I cannot reasonably suppose he would make that the cause of closing my studies so abruptly. There is little to be made out of his letter, except that I am to leave Barley Wood at once."

"Perhaps he will let you come back again. Oh! Aggie! what shall I do without you?" and making no further effort to restrain her grief, she gave way to bitter weeping.

"I should not care to come back, but for you, Carrie," said Agnes, tenderly. "Father must be lonely without me. I wonder he has consented to my absence so long. But do not grieve too bitterly about it; I shall not leave you until you are better—quite able to do without me." and she smiled in Carrie's downcast eyes.

"Oh! Aggie! I am so rebellious! Not an hour ago I shut my eyes and prayed, as I sat here in the happy silence, '*Thy will be done*;' and if ever a prayer went up from a sincere heart, one did from mine that moment. I thought I was perfectly submissive to God's

will, and as a test, I imagined many very severe trials, and I asked myself if I could endure them, and I did not rebel. I thought of a separation from you, Aggie, and of going back to Aunt Gregory's; and, hard as it was to anticipate, I was able to say '*Thy will be done*.' But it was because I placed the trial so far off—a year or more, at the least—that I thought myself able to bear it. If I had dreamed of your going now, I fear I could not have prayed as I did."

"Perhaps God will not require you to endure this dreaded trial," said Agnes.

"How can it be averted?" asked Carrie, gazing almost hopefully into the brightening face of her friend, unable to divine the reason of her smiling.

"What is to prevent you from going home with me?" Then Carrie saw cause for smiling. "You are not well enough to study, and will not be for a month or more. Your health demands a change, and I offer you a pleasant one. Shall I write to your Aunt Gregory to-night?"

The cloud parted so suddenly that Carrie was blinded in the sunshine. Words could not express her grateful joy, and Agnes' heart grew light from sympathy. They talked but of the pleasant theme until they went to their pillows that night, and then Carrie could not go to sleep for thinking of the happiness in waiting for her.

The day before their departure was wet and lowering, but Agnes did not fail to be at the

chapel in the afternoon. Carrie was unable to accompany her, and felt the disappointment keenly. Agnes sat in the transept corner for some time before the service began; she was oppressed by the thought of the morrow, which would separate her from the new associations she loved. She yearned to be with her father again, to dispel his loneliness and administer to his comfort; yet her filial affection could not overcome her regret at leaving the sanctuary where she had found strength and consolation when weak and bitterly cast down. As she surveyed the interior of the little gothic chapel, so perfect in its adaptation and design, and saw the minister, in his snowy surplice, kneeling at the altar, while the low, solemn strains of the organ seemed breathing a prayer with the silent worshippers, she was chilled at the thought of the exchange she must make; the old meeting-house; the high, unshapely pulpit; the great square windows, with the faded calico curtains; the long, extemporaneous prayers; Deacon Farley's hoarse bass-viol; and her good father's dry, long sermons. Nor did she "lay a sinful stress upon externals" merely; in her strict self-examination she had found she could easily lull the tumult within, if that were all. Her convictions of the claims of the Church had taken deep root; she might disregard, but could not remove them.

She lingered long upon her knees when the service was ended, and was the last to leave the chapel. She withdrew unwillingly. She would have chosen to linger there alone, wrestling in prayer until a light burst upon her, and she knew the way she must go. She trembled to leave the place in her blindness and doubt.

She had called at the Rectory in the morning, and taken leave of Mrs. Bellamy and the children. Much to her disappointment and regret, Mr. Bellamy was not at home. She was unwilling to leave Litchfield without bidding him farewell, and besides, she was almost unconsciously looking to him for direction and counsel. She was hesitating whether to call at the Rectory again or not, for she doubted her courage to talk freely with him, even if she had the opportunity, when he overtook her, not far from the church, saying he was then on his way to Barley Wood to call upon Miss Seabury and herself.

Mr. Bellamy had never before, in his conversations with her, interrogated her regarding the convictions her mind had received from her late investigations, or the decision, if any, those convictions had compelled her to make. He knew, better than she imagined, all she must contend with before making a decision, and the obstacles on either hand, threatening to destroy her peace should she disregard them. Knowing her past history and late experience as he did, he re-

garded her with a most religious interest, and had not despaired of the final result, even when she was most dejected and unbelieving, until he heard of her sudden recall home. He had not apprehended her removal from the influence of the Church before she had become too firmly grounded in its faith to be carried away by any adverse influence, no matter how powerful it might be. He felt he must then speak plainly and freely with her, not to set her at variance with her father, but at peace with her own conscience and her God.

"I am fully convinced of the claims of the Church," she said, in reply to his kind and direct inquiries. "I admit them, without a doubt. I love the service; the public worship of God would seem almost soulless to me now, without it—yet, I cannot decide what course to pursue. It would grieve my father most bitterly, should I avow my attachment for the Episcopal Church, and it would be no light trial for me to forsake it now."

"I doubt if you would not sin in doing so," said Mr. Bellamy; "but it is far from my intention to dictate in this serious matter. God alone should direct you—upon Him only must you call for guidance and help. You must make a decision, and that soon; you will not be suffered to remain on neutral ground, and I trust you will not wish to, as therein would be your

greatest danger and unhappiness. Make this the subject of your constant prayer, my dear Miss Ryland, casting every human interest aside, and desiring but to know perfectly what the will of the Lord is; and despair not of heavenly direction, for it will surely be given you. I trust you will not fail to inform me when your decision is made, as I have something of importance to communicate to you then."

His last words, spoken in a low and altered tone, forcibly recalled the old mystery to Agnes, and looking up eagerly into his face, she impulsively asked if it was something regarding her mother.

"Yes; but I cannot reveal it to you now; it might influence you in making your decision, and you have enough bearing upon you already. Write to me when your mind is fully established, and you shall know my secret, and, in the meanwhile, do not let your curiosity distress you."

"It will, it must," replied Agnes warmly—"now that I have reason to suppose your secret concerns my decision in any way. I wish I had some treasured word of my mother's to direct me now;" and she looked imploringly into his face, as if he could grant her what she wished.

"That would not be relying solely upon heavenly guidance."

"You are right," she said, after a thoughtful pause. "If your secret bears—no matter how

remotely—upon the choice I am to make, it is better for me to be ignorant of it for the present. I hope my decision will have her approval—perhaps I shall waver and fall back if it does not.”

“Not if your heart is fixed where it should be,” replied Mr. Bellamy, impressively, as they turned into the avenue winding before the front of the Seminary. Carrie was smiling at them from her window, and Miss Lacy and Miss Hopkins staring in statuesque attitudes from the library.

* * * * *

“There it is!” joyfully exclaimed Agnes, when the stage-coach reached the top of the hill, and they could see the great red chimneys of the old parsonage peeping up from among the trees; “there it is, Carrie! looking home-like, and welcome as ever! In a moment more, and we shall see the front piazza, and somebody watching for us. I hope Aunt Lottie is there.”

“So do I,” responded Carrie, shaking off her weariness, and catching Agnes’ smiles. “Is that the brook you talk so much about? How it rattles and roars! Those bare branches must hold a leafy arch over it in the summer time.”

“Yes, that is my brook, and when summer comes we will chase down its banks together. That little rustic bridge in the bend, is the very spot where the trout are the thickest; and there is

the meadow-hill, where the strawberries grow; it will be white with blossoms before long. That cluster of elms, down in the valley, is half a mile or so from Aunt Lottie’s; we pass under them, when we go ‘cross lots’ to see her; and there is the spire of St. Mark’s, and beyond it the old-fashioned steeple of father’s meeting-house. The gilded cock on the top, was the greatest admiration of my infantine years; and here is my spotted heifer, in the pasture, I am almost tempted to get out and give her the first greeting;” and Agnes gazed so long and affectionately upon the pretty creature who was grazing quietly, without once lifting up her white head to give them the least notice, that Carrie, whose eyes had scarcely wandered from the parsonage for all Agnes had been saying, was the first to catch sight of the long, wide piazza, and the little group collected upon it.

“There they are, Aggie! Is that Aunt Lottie running down to the gate?”

“Yes, that is Aunt Lottie, and there is Mrs. Burns, the housekeeper, and Jane. Do you wonder I am glad to get home, when such happy faces meet me? But where is father? He should be standing in the door.”

The stage-coach stopped before the great white house, and Aunt Lottie was at the gate, with open arms to receive them. She gave Agnes a long, motherly embrace, neither saying a word,

but their tears poured fast. To Carrie she extended a most cordial welcome, and folding her arms about the frail little thing, almost carried her into the house. Agnes had bounded in before them, and after a breathless search through several rooms, returned to the library, before whose great crackling fire Aunt Lottie was unwrapping their shivering, pale-faced guest.

"Where is father? Did he know I was coming to-day?"

"He has not yet returned," said Aunt Lottie. "He sent a despatch yesterday, saying he would be here to-night, without fail."

"And that will be several hours yet," said Agnes, slowly recovering from her disappointment, and seating herself in her familiar seat, gazing fondly about the room, which was the dearest in the whole house to her. Every thing was the same as when she saw it last, and as far back as she could remember: the roaring fire on the wide, old-fashioned hearth; pussy asleep on the faded rug; the solemn ticking of the quaint Dutch clock; the great round table between the east windows, the multitude of books and papers thereon; the antique inkstand, with its three quill pens; the bursting portfolio; the open book of reference; the high, leather-backed chair, whose emptiness had made her glad heart sink heavily; and above, and most natural of all, the dingy books staring solemnly from the shelves.

To her, those books would always wear the *faces* they had in her early childhood, when each had an expression of its own—some so solemn as to awe her with a mysterious dread. Some of the volumes bore resemblance to the men and women of her little world. There was the great brown encyclopedia, with a face and air precisely like Judge Carsen's, who used to smoke his pipe on that hearthstone, his big brogans planted on the polished andirons, to the great vexation of Mrs. Burns, the housekeeper. Nearly every book had as expressive a countenance, and as of old, she felt them looking down upon her, the moment she entered their presence. Had she been alone, she might have spent much time in staring at them and the ruddy coals, recalling the fancies of her butterfly days, and conjuring up sweet visions to cheat her anticipation again.

Swiftly that afternoon sped by to Carrie, who lay upon the sofa, dreamingly listening to the pleasant voices of Agnes and Aunt Lottie, sitting near each other, their hands idle on their knitting work. She was too happy to talk, and so she let her eyelids fall, and they chatted on without calling upon her to say a word. Carrie Seabury was never happier in her life. She had experienced a kindred satisfaction by Mrs. Belamy's fireside, but that was in the shadow of Barley Wood—this was twenty miles away, and she was not to return on the morrow. She was

made for the atmosphere of a quiet, happy home,—she had withered—almost died from the deprivation of what her life required,—and her spirit quickly awoke under the refreshing influence then bearing upon it—as violets long hidden under the snow-banks, start up at the first breath of spring. She forgot Barley Wood, and her Aunt Gregory's great house—her mother's grave, and her own dependence,—and her dreaming ran on as it chose, until her home was on that hearthstone, with Agnes and Aunt Lottie, and her tired heart was full of peace, repose, and content. Sleep carried her further out into blissful dreamland before she was aware, and it was Agnes' joyous exclamation, and bounding from the room, at her father's return, that brought her abruptly back to real life again.

CHAPTER XVI.

AGNES' DECISION.

"WHOM do you say you have brought with you?"

"Carrie Seabury, the orphan girl I have written to you about. She is now recovering from a very severe and dangerous illness, and I could not bear to leave her behind me; her heart was almost broken when I told her you had sent for me. I think, too, her health requires a removal from the Seminary for awhile, and she has no home to go to, poor child." Surprised at his apparent displeasure, she added, slightly confused, "You will be pleased with her, father; she is so gentle and unassuming; the house will be none the less quiet for her presence in it, I assure you. She is asleep now in the library; if I did not awake her when I saw you coming."

They were standing in the hall—for Dr. Ryland had paused suddenly when Agnes had given him the name of the friend who had accompanied her. He had met his daughter with a coldness and reserve which chilled but had not subdued her affectionate enthusiasm; but on this announcement, he regarded her with

a silent displeasure, most painful and inexplicable. She was made to feel keenly, before a word had passed his tightly compressed lips, that she had committed a serious offence in inviting Carrie to share their hospitality,—that she was most unwelcome, and she was fearful he would take little pains to conceal his annoyance. Stricken in spirit, she stood trembling before him, bravely striving to keep back her tears. She had laid her hand fondly upon his arm to lead him to the library, but he remained unmoved, evidently concocting some decisive plan of action.

Agnes was confounded by his strange demeanor, and was at a loss what to do. Never before had she discovered limits to her father's hospitality. Why was Carrie Seabury now unwelcomed by him who had ever cordially greeted her chosen friends? Could there be any just cause? She could not believe her father acted without one. Had he not been deceived by the misrepresentations of some designing person? Was it not all in keeping with the unintelligible letter she had received from him several weeks before? It was a labyrinth of mystery from which conjecture offered no release.

"You are displeased with me, father," she said, fondly throwing her arms around his neck, and gazing earnestly into his stern face. He

looked at her steadily for a moment, then giving her a mechanical embrace, silently put her from him, and proceeded to his sleeping-room. Agnes followed him, resolved that the enigma should now be explained, and the cause of his displeasure revealed.

"I can brook any thing from you, Agnes, better than deceit," said he, walking up and down the apartment.

Agnes' sad eyes dilated with astonishment, "Deceit! wherein have I ever deceived you, father?"

"It is lamentable to see you blindly misled, but doubly so, when you willingly lend assistance to the intrigues of your deceivers."

"I cannot divine your meaning! I entreat you, father, to speak plainly to me. Let me know of what you accuse me, that I may speedily refute the charge, or obtain your forgiveness. Wherein have I deceived you?"

"Is your Aunt Charlotte here?"

"Yes. She came early this morning to attend to the preparation for our arrival."

"Say, rather, to aid in deceiving me," he said, sharply. "Go, and request her to come here."

Agnes sprang forward, and locked her arm in his. "Oh, father! how can you speak so of Aunt Lottie? What has misled you? I beg you to tell me all, that I may explain every thing to your satisfaction—but do not grieve

her by an accusation entirely unfounded. How have I deceived you? How has she? Whose word do you believe in preference to mine?"

Her full truthful eye steadily searched his own, and its soft rebuke smote him keenly. Yes, whom should he believe in preference to her—his darling and only child—whose pure soul had ever held falsehood and deceit in abhorrence? Should he be the first to suspect her integrity? Agnes, his priceless, peerless jewel? Could he not look through her liquid eyes into the transparent beauty of her soul and detect no flaw? Those eyes were her mother's eyes—could he cast that bitter accusation in their saintly depths?

He led her to the sofa, and seated himself beside her. Softly the hand of Agnes stole within her father's, but he did not return the pressure; she thought his abstracted silence would never end. Was he waiting for her to renew the conversation? After a protracted silence, she did so.

"Do tell me, father?"

"Do you know, Agnes, why I called you home from school so suddenly?"

"No, unless because you were lonely without me—I thought that the probable cause, and was glad to come."

"I could have submitted to your absence for all that, Agnes. My reasons were of greater

magnitude. I called you home to remove you from a seductive influence,—one to which you have blindly yielded—given yourself up, regardless of your own happiness and mine."

The great mystery was gradually unfolding. Agnes grasped eagerly the few disentangled threads, but kept silent while her father continued—

"I know the fascination a high-toned liturgy has upon a temperament like yours, but I did not know that the fallacies of a corrupt Church could be made palatable enough to be sought after and greedily received by one as well acquainted with them as you are. Had I been told that you had turned away from the faith of your forefathers, and entered within the pale of Rome, I should have been less chagrined at your weakness; for there, the externals are more glittering, imposing, and alluring to an imaginative mind. Here, there is no excuse for you. You have suffered them to blind and lead you into error; and to thwart my purpose in removing you from school, Miss Seabury accompanies you home."

"You are mistaken, father," was all she could say. She foresaw a storm her feeble hand could not stay,—a tempest which would drive her she knew not where; but she inwardly prayed that it might be, to the shadow of the Great Rock.

"How am I mistaken, Agnes?" His icy com-

posure and the falcon gaze of his gray eye chilled her through. "Have you not been for the last two months, or more, a regular, yes, a daily attendant at the Episcopal church?"

Agnes admitted that she had.

"And have you not sought the instruction of its pastor—placing yourself under his guidance—reading from his library, and believing what you read? Have you not thus been guilty of disrespect to me, to say nothing of a greater sin; and have you not cast aside my teachings as worthless—as false?"

"Oh, father! do not judge me so hastily," sobbed Agnes, leaning upon his shoulder. "I do respect your instructions. I sought your counsel first of all—and am ready to receive it now. I have proceeded with prayer thus far, and—"

"You have been led by error thus far," interrupted her father; "do not delude yourself by supposing you have had spiritual guidance. You have been led into the Episcopacy by zealots. I know them, every one, and shall break the most subtle hold they may have upon you. Now go and ask your Aunt Charlotte to come here."

"Not that you may converse with her upon this subject, father. She is no way connected with it. She is not aware even of my late interest in the Episcopal Church. She has never

attempted to lead me in that direction, and you have no cause to blame her."

"But this Miss Seabury who has had 'such an indefatigable concern in your spiritual welfare.'" He quoted from Miss Lacy's letter—"not open and manifest, but silent and hidden"—you surely cannot deny that she has been the chief instrument used in instilling into your mind the false doctrine which I trust has taken but shallow root? It was to remove you beyond her pernicious influence that I sent for you; and I shall not be baffled, Agnes, by her presence here."

Agnes knew him too well to plead in Carrie's defence, or to attempt to change his mind, or to soften his prejudices, even sufficiently to allow Carrie to share their hospitality pleasantly. She was, therefore, thrust into a very painful situation, from which it was extremely difficult to extricate herself; but her characteristic decision and good judgment did not fail her.

"Then you are unwilling, father, to have Miss Seabury remain as our guest? I am sure you will change your opinion of her when you know her better."

"I know enough of her already—I understand her perfectly. Her presence here will be a sore annoyance to me, and I trust you will make her visit as short as possible."

"She shall leave to-morrow. Aunt Lottie

will invite her home with her. Meanwhile, my dear father, I believe you will spare her sensitive feelings—she is an orphan.”

“I am not a boor, Agnes,” he said, sharply. “I would not have her driven from beneath my roof; nor did I ever insult one who shared my hospitality. But now, you know she is to me an unpleasant guest, I expect you will in some way—the one you just suggested is a fair one—shorten her stay with us.”

“Will you come now to the library, and see her?” asked Agnes, rising.

“I will meet her at the supper-table; I wish to be alone till then. And, Agnes, you may bring my writing materials here.”

She soon returned, and spread the required articles upon the table. Her father stood before the fire gazing moodily into it. His back was towards her, or she might have seen him wipe the moisture from his eyes when she approached.

“Father,” said she, timidly, “I wish you would tell me who it is that has such an intimate knowledge of my affairs, and reports them inaccurately to you?”

He appeared not to hear her. “Go, now,” he said, seating himself at the table, arranging his papers, and dipping his pen into the ink. She would have repeated the question, but deferred it, rather than add to his annoyance. She was leaving the room, when he carelessly pushed a

pile of letters and papers upon the floor. She went back to replace them; and, in so doing, there fell into her hands an envelope bearing a chirography not to be mistaken by any of the Barley Wood girls. The hot blood rushed to her face as she held the letter a moment, hesitating whether to express her feelings or not; but she dropped it into the portfolio without a word, and then went into the great, silent parlor, whose shutters let in the daylight but on rare occasions, and walked up and down in the dreary chillness for a half hour or more, trying to calm herself before returning to her Aunt Lottie and Carrie.

It was no easy task for Agnes, after a long conversation with her aunt that night, to tell Carrie all they had decided it best for her to know immediately. It was near midnight; Agnes hoped the tired girl would be sound asleep, for she had retired early, and that the painful conversation would be deferred until the morning; but when Agnes softly entered her chamber, Carrie's happy eyes were beaming from the pillow. Hers were red with weeping, and her face haggard with excitement and grief.

She told Carrie all about it that night. She was not required to say much; for Carrie was quick to anticipate what it would have cost Agnes a bitter trial to express, and her mortification and distress were diminished by Car-

rie's cheerfulness, and her commendation of the change. She begged Agnes to grieve no more on her account; she should not be unhappy unless Agnes was, and she must not be, while her faith was fixed on a loving and merciful God. She should not refuse Aunt Lottie's cordial invitation; for she was grateful for the opportunity of improving, and being improved, by her acquaintance, and could imagine nothing more delightful than a visit at her home. She did not wish to return to Barley Wood; she was resolved never to go back there again, unless Agnes did, which was very doubtful. She was not surprised at the discovery of Miss Lacy's letter; she had suspected the correspondence, and doubted her power to remove any prejudice Dr. Ryland had received concerning her character, and influence upon Agnes. She soothed and encouraged her all she could, removing a part of her sorrow, and it was long after midnight before they fell asleep.

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The night was coming in overcast with clouds, and melancholy with the howling wind, and Agnes Ryland stood alone in the dusky library, watching Aunt Lottie's old-fashioned chaise move slowly up the hill. Carrie had left her, smiling hopefully with her farewell kiss, begging her not to grieve at what looked like a dis-

appointment, but might wear a happier guise after all. Agnes caught momentary hope and strength from her child-like words of encouragement; but when she was gone, and Aunt Lottie with her, the burden fell back again, and she yielded to the despondency she had battled against since the night before. She had seen but little of her father since their interview the previous evening. He had met Carrie with bland but cold politeness, chilling her preconceived admiration of him by his dignified reserve. Aunt Lottie's cheerfulness had been restrained by his repelling gravity; and wondering what could have crossed him, she drew beside Carrie, who had stolen into a corner, and soon succeeded in restoring her happiness. Agnes had endeavored by every means in her power to recall his usual equanimity, but in vain; he regarded her with an expressive silence, grieving her more than open rebuke would have done. She was glad of Carrie's departure, much as she regretted the cause.

She had restrained her tears all day, but she could not check them then. Alone with God, who knew how her heart ached from its fulness, she might yield to the pressing torrent. She sat upon the low, wide window-seat, hidden by the heavy curtains. There was not a dearer spot in the old house to her than that deep window-seat, looking across the garden, down the

sloping meadow, and through the valley maples to the white chimneys of Aunt Lottie's quiet home; for there she had ever retreated when she wished to be in a world by herself, undisturbed by any one, and the old impulse still directed her thither. She heard Mrs. Burns come in and stir the fire, sighing deeply over some household vexation as she bustled from the room, but her father's footstep, as he softly entered and stood before the fireplace in a meditative attitude, was unheard by her, or she would have smothered the sobbing that brought him quickly to her side. She was not aware of his presence until his hand lay upon her head, and he gently spoke her name.

He sat down beside her and drew her to him, fondly smoothing back her curls, as he always did when she lay on his breast, and as he once did with those of a dearer head that would nestle there never more. The remembrance of those dear days came back to him with startling distinctness—the desolate blank between the present and the past was swept away—he held the fair form closer to his heart, and looking upon the upturned face, saw through the tearful mist and dim twilight the gaze of loving eyes that made him forget Agnes, in the long silence that followed. He was the first to speak, but not until he had tried in vain to recall the illusion a wayward thought dispelled.

He began gently in his attempt to discover her exact position, how far she had retrograded from the truth, and with what degree of confidence she held her new opinions. His well-pointed questioning assisted, not only him in making that discovery, but aided Agnes herself, who was surprised at the ready answers she was enabled to give, the clearness of her views, and the strong foundation of the faith she was called upon to defend. Without wishing to oppose or grieve her father, who interrogated without reasoning with, or disputing her, she boldly took her stand for what she conscientiously believed to be the truth, meekly asking his advice upon subjects unsettled in her mind. The result of this close catechizing, throughout which he maintained his composure, no easy task at certain junctures, when Agnes could scarcely falter out her replies, was his declaring her to be thoroughly poisoned by error, and blinded by false doctrine; "and," added the old man, solemnly, "a double condemnation is yours, for you have sinned willingly, and against the light."

"I have earnestly prayed to be led into the truth, father."

"Yes, but with your heart set wilfully upon what you would convert into the truth. I say you have sinned against the light, have knelt voluntarily to be made captive to error, for you

knew the falsity of the doctrines you have embraced before you courted them. Have I not fought against them all my life, and have you not been a listener to my teachings? Is it becoming for you to set aside as naught the result of my laborious studies, to give me no respect as a teacher, and to accept strangers as your counsellors, and those that I have proclaimed to the world as false teachers? Have you yet been taught to deny my right to the title of a minister of Christ?

"You do not answer me, Agnes. You know they would not recognize my right to preach, and that they would forbid you to partake of the Sacrament administered by me, and teach you to consider me as out of Christ, because out of what they blasphemously call the One Holy Apostolic Church."

Had Agnes been struck dumb she could have made answer as well. She sat silent, a mighty flood rushing over her.

"I may seem severe to you, Agnes; but I am not. You think, perhaps, I attach too much importance to my own opinions, and am destitute of Christian charity to those who disagree with me; that I should peaceably tolerate and respect your faith in any of the many creeds distracting Protestant Christendom, as long as you cherish in your heart all that was required of the eunuch by the Apostle Philip—a belief that

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But, my child, you now add unto your faith in the Redeemer, heresies that will at last uproot every germ of spiritual life. Believing and knowing this, as I do, can you wonder at my striving to undeceive you?"

"I believe you will endeavor to do your duty," replied Agnes, with difficulty, "and I will try to do the same. You must remember, father, that I have a conscience in this matter, as well as you."

"And your conscience should not lead you to despise the counsel and admonition of your father," he said, sternly. "You are but a child in these matters—little prepared to judge for yourself upon grave questions of theological dispute that have taxed the study and research of able and experienced minds."

"It is but the simple faith delivered unto us by Christ I am seeking for, father; the same that was delivered to the untaught fishermen of Galilee; not above the comprehension of the simplest of us all. It was not a desire to join the Episcopal Church, or even my admiration of its liturgy, that led me to the studious investigations of its claims as apostolic; but a desire to assure myself more perfectly of the firm foundation of Presbytery. I was prejudiced against the Episcopal Church, and unwillingly admitted the truth of its claims. I feel I have God's approval of every step I have taken thus far. I

have advanced with hesitation and doubt, and had it been possible for me to communicate with you, I should have appealed to you for assistance. I do not disregard your counsel and admonition, and never shall; but, with my present convictions, father, I think it would be impossible for me to turn back."

Was it wise for her to speak with such decision? She had not intended it, but was irresistibly impelled to utter what she did, and when the words were spoken she knew that her position was unmistakably defined—the thought relieved her—and that she must defend it until convinced of her error.

It was hard for the old man to maintain his stolid composure at that issue. It was too dark for Agnes to see the workings of his face, as he suddenly arose and moved restlessly about the room, finally seating himself in his writing-chair, and tossing over the books and papers, manifestations revealing to Agnes, who was breathlessly awaiting his words, an irritable discomposure, which she hoped would be subdued before the conversation was continued. It was not, however.

"Agnes, I have but little more to say to you upon this subject. My mind is firmly established, and I trust yours is not. You have manifested a perversity I did not expect, a blindness I never saw equalled. I am void of all patience

with you, but my decision shall wait for yours. Will you, or will you not, persist in joining yourself to a Church that must separate you widely from me? I give you two weeks for preparing your decision. Let it be made with prayer. I will furnish you books which it is your duty to investigate, and lend you all the assistance you may ask. I shall await your decision with anxiety and prayer."

Those two weeks were the battle-field of Agnes Ryland's life. Severe were the conflicts, in which she was not always victor; and often weary was she of the struggle and trial, which would have overcome her but for the divine aid won by her prayers. She accepted the books her father furnished, and applied to the library of the Rector of the Episcopal Church in the village for more. She conversed but little with her father; she found it useless to do so. After their interview she returned to her study baffled and dispirited—not by arguments and facts—but by the uncharitable and contentious spirit he made no effort to subdue. She was pained to perceive his opposition to her arose chiefly from the mortification her apostasy would cause him in the face of his opponents. It was a hard struggle for her; but greater was the glory of the victory.

She had not even Aunt Lottie and Carrie to comfort and encourage her. She would not

have sought their advice in the matter if she could—or that of any one—so determined was she to be uninfluenced by personal considerations in making the decision which would prove an important landmark in her life and experience. Moreover, it had been the expressed wish of her father that she should keep herself entirely aloof from them until her decision was made.

Every thing seemed conspiring to try her faith and test her strength. There was nothing beneath heaven to cheer and uplift her—every window was darkened; let her turn which way she would, she was assaulted. In the direction where she had expectantly looked and waited for light, there arose a cloud denser than all the rest, to overshadow and terrify her. She had thought Roscoe Field would have sent her a letter differing from any he had before written her, for he knew her trouble and distress. He did think to relieve her speedily, and most happily, when he wrote her of the necessity of his going to Europe in the course of two months, to be absent a year or more, and ardently proposed, what her late letters could not lead him to suppose she would reject, her accompanying him as his bride. “She would then,” he wrote, “be freed forever, he hoped, from the frightful incubus which had so long haunted her.”

That was a deep thrust in an open wound, and the victim staggered beneath it, and had not an

Almighty arm sustained her, she would have thrown all to the tempest, that it might trouble her no more, and Roscoe Field would have received a different letter from the one she sealed late that night. She did not know until the next morning, when she sent the letter to the office, of what unyielding stuff her woman's heart was made; and she thanked God for the same.

The two weeks expired, and Agnes appeared at the breakfast-table that morning with a calm, happy face, and greeted her father with a cheerful affection which thawed for a moment his freezing silence; but his continued reserve discouraged every effort she made at conversation, and having failed in several attempts, she relapsed into an abstraction as unbroken as his own.

“You will come into the library soon, Agnes,” he said, upon rising from the table.

“I will go with you now, if you wish it,” she replied. There was a slight tremulousness in her voice, and the color left her cheeks.

“Very well, you may come in now.” He walked slowly from the room, and Agnes followed him, the light shining in upon her soul as she went.

* * * * *

She came out pale and tearful, but unvanquished. The victory was hers; but was the

trophy little else than sorrow? She was not prepared to answer the question then, though it haunted her. With those last, slowly-uttered words of her father's ringing in her ears, she hurried to her chamber, locked herself within, and heard them there repeated over and over again, until she thought they would make her crazed.

"You have decided, Agnes. You have built a wall of separation between us."

The storm passed over at last, for the Master's voice rebuked it; the winds were lulled, and there was a great calm. "Peace, be still," Agnes heard, and trusted without fear. Approved by God, why should she be longer afraid?

She wrote to Mr. Bellamy that afternoon—not more from the curiosity his promise had aroused, than a yearning for counsel and comfort. Near sundown she saw her father driving from the house, wrapped in his travelling-coat, his little portmanteau beside him. Could it be he was departing for any length of time, and had failed to inform her of his plans? She called immediately to Mrs. Burns, who acquainted her with Dr. Ryland's intention to be absent a week, or more, expressing great surprise that he had not even bidden farewell to his daughter. It was a painful addition to Agnes' sorrow—a confirmation of the separation between her and her father's heart.

She had not long to wait for Mr. Bellamy's reply to her letter. It came before her father's return, and lay for a long time upon her lap before she broke the seal. Could she stand unshaken if a voice came then, like a voice from her mother's grave, in disapproval of her choice, imploring her to return to the fold she had forsaken? She did not read the letter until her heart gave answer without wavering.

It was truly a pastoral epistle, filling several sheets; and it was in the last the secret relating to her mother and herself was briefly and touchingly explained. She had prepared herself to repel an attack, but not for a revelation like that.

She was already a member of the holy Catholic Church. When a little babe, her mother, unknown to her father, who was then a godless man, had carried her to the Church she had forsaken, but still regretted and loved, and beheld her received, by baptism, "into the congregation of Christ's flock, and signed with the sign of the cross." It was Mr. Bellamy himself, then in the first years of his ministry, who had taken her thus into his arms and blessed her. Her mother was then in feeble health; but had willingly undergone a wearisome journey, by stage-coaches, in the spring of the year, for the sake of conferring upon her child the inestimable privilege that must otherwise be denied, or indefinitely deferred, but

probably lost. Her husband was absent from home, and she knew his opinions too well to acquaint him with her project. The most painful desire of her heart was the baptism of her child, and that into the Church she had blindly renounced; yet she would not have carried her little daughter thither, owing to her husband's prejudices, and her own sinful pride, could she have had the Sacrament performed in the Presbyterian Church, which she regularly attended, but had not joined; for, as she was not a communicant, and her husband was a non-professor, the customs of that Church forbade baptism to her child. Gratefully she fled with it to the hospitable, sheltering fold, which gathers, "as a rightful mother, the universe of infants in her arms, daring not, wishing not to repel a child from the only sacrament of which it is capable—the heaven-ordained point at which grace is sent forth to meet it—or to draw among the infants of a span long, the tremendous separation between sheep and goats."

In the short interview he had with her mother at the time—he never saw her before or afterwards—she revealed to him the distress and dissatisfaction she endured in her separation from the Church, and her longing to return to it; but the obstacles were great, seemingly insurmountable. The thought which gave her the keenest sorrow was, that her child could not

be reared beneath its protection and influence. "But her prayers have been answered," he wrote. "Who can doubt the divine guidance of your steps from that day to this?"

He heard from Mrs. Ryland but once afterwards, a short time before her death, when she wrote to him regarding her child. It was then several months since the baptism. The husband had returned and been informed of the performance of the rite, but unsuspecting by whom it was administered, had been indifferent upon the subject. She was then slowly wasting with consumption, and would commend to him, before her departure, the remembrance of her child, in his prayers, and by personal interest, if it ever lay in his power. How excellently God had brought it all to pass!

Would Agnes be willing to take the charge of the parish school just started in Tolland, a little village, not far from Litchfield? In a pecuniary point of view, the situation was not an attractive one, but he offered her the opportunity of accepting it, as he thought he was justified in concluding from what she had written to him, that the decision she had made would render her independence of her father's bounty desirable.

How could she stay longer from Aunt Lottie and Carrie? Her father's request had been limited; she was certainly bound by it no longer,

and that fortnight's separation had not been the least part of the trial. Informing Mrs. Burns where she was going, and that she need not send for her that night unless her father returned, and in that case not to fail in doing so—she hurried through the dusky twilight, and light falling snow, across the meadow, directly towards the glimmering beckoning light beaming from the little parlor window, whose hearthstone was like an oasis in a desert to her then.

She resolved that night, with Aunt Lottie's advice, to accept the school at Tolland, providing her father did not refuse his consent. Nothing should induce her to leave him, if he manifested the least desire for her to remain at home, even if he continued to treat her with coldness and reserve. But when she asked his advice in the matter, declaring her reluctance to leave him unless it was his wish, he sternly reminded her of the wall of separation she had built between them, and would say nothing further. Broken and chilled in spirit, yet resolute to struggle through her overwhelming difficulties, she went to her chamber, waited long upon her knees, and when her way shone clear before her, arose and wrote the letter to Mr. Bellamy which resulted in her bidding a sad farewell to the old parsonage not many days after, and going out untried and alone to do battle with the world. Her aged father took her hand

when she paused upon the threshold—held it tightly during the long, painful silence in which he stood reproachfully searching her swimming eyes, then drew her to his breast and kissed her, uttering a husky adieu, as he reluctantly dropped her clinging hand,—but he did not relent nor did she.

She left Carrie by Aunt Lottie's fireside. The wounded, weary dove had found sweet shelter at last, and was not to be driven out into the storm again.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE FUNERAL.

"You need not stay to sweep, to-night, my dears. Put on your bonnets and hurry home as quickly as you can,—there is another shower coming up, I see."

The two coarsely but neatly clad girls, who had lingered behind their playmates to perform the task which fell to them that night, appeared unwilling to obey the kind and considerate request. Instead of taking down their sun-bonnets, and hastening like freed, wild birds from the sight of the books and maps that had restrained their glad young spirits all day, they stood whispering to each other, with sad, concerned countenances, and then bashfully approached the desk, before which their teacher sat, her head bowed dejectedly, her face covered in her hands.

"We do not want to leave you here alone, Miss Ryland," at last spoke Alice, the older of the two; "we do not care if we do get a little wet."

"We are so sorry for you," lisped out little Mary Lisle, her soft blue eyes overflowing. "I

AFTER THE FUNERAL.

307

am sorry for every naughty thing I have done since you first came to teach us. I mean to be good now, and never make you any more trouble."

Agnes drew them both to her side and kissed them—sweet comforters that they were—the only ones besides her heavenly Father, to administer to her, in her loneliness, sympathy and love. All day she had yearned for solitude—for a place where her full heart might flow out unseen, unheard, by any save the God of the fatherless and the distressed.

"But I wish to be here alone a little while," she said, putting them gently from her. "I would much rather you would go, my dears. Be here bright and early to-morrow morning, if your life and health are spared,—and I wish you would find out before then what has kept Bessie Roberts from school to-day. I fear the poor child is sick again. And Alice, if you will run in and see old Mrs. Graham to-night, and make her tea and toast, and read a chapter and prayers with her, you will oblige me very much indeed, for I do not see how I can call there to-night, but she may expect me to-morrow without fail."

Alice, always glad to be her teacher's assistant, particularly in acts of charity, cheerfully consented, and hastened from the school-house more readily than she would otherwise have

done, followed by little Mary Lisle, who, after running back for the second time to kiss her teacher good-night, was silent all her way home, for thinking what a very sad thing it would be, if her father, whose pet and idol she was, should be laid dead and cold in the church-yard.

It was a week after the funeral, but to Agnes a greater length of time had elapsed since the bright May morning, when her father's corpse was carried from the old meeting-house in whose pulpit he had stood for nearly twenty years, out into the grave-yard, and slowly lowered beside her, who had lain waiting for him there beneath the rose-trees very long. It was more than a week since she stood beside those two graves,—one newly moulded, the other sunken, and with a mossy stone at its head, and wished she were lying between them, heart and hands forever at rest—the battle over—the work all done. The thick darkness that walled her in that day, still densely closed about her, and prayers, nor hope, had been strong enough to force a way for the light to come in. Groaning in spirit, utterly desolate, bitterly did she cry unto heaven for release—eternal release. And it was that cry of unthankfulness, as she afterwards learned, which shut out the light of peace from her soul, preventing it from bursting gloriously upon her, until having armed herself for the contest again,

she meekly importuned—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" She had lain down, hoping to die, from the grievous chastisement the Master sent for her strengthening and cure.

It was the first day after her return to the little parish-school of Tolland. She was glad to resume her duties as teacher, and had hastened to do so; but, with that oppressive sorrow on her heart, she found them more irksome than before. She was infinitely grateful for having something to do,—for work wherewith to shorten the long, leaden hours,—and greater cause had she to be thankful for remunerative employment when the contents of her father's will were made known to her, as they were shortly after his death, and before her return to her school.

Dr. Ryland had been suddenly prostrated with a violent disease, and Agnes was hastily summoned home, and reached his bedside but in time to catch a flickering glance of affection, as he feebly pressed her hand, and whispered her name, with a blessing and his last breath. She had no conversation with him, and she sometimes thought it as well she had not, for she had little hope he would have recalled—even upon his death-pillow—his severe disapproval of her choice; yet it was agonizing for her to think of his final departure before that terrible wall of separation had been broken down. But had not death undermined it? Was

he not then numbered with the "saints in glory everlasting," in whose communion she steadfastly believed?

Agnes Ryland sat in the lonely little school-room, the rain pouring against the windows, and the wind lashing the maple boughs against them, revolving the whole in her mind,—every trial, fear, and discouragement that had assaulted her failing heart during the last few weeks. Her position and situation had been greatly changed; she had changed them. She was no longer an heiress—nothing but a poor school-teacher, dependent upon her small salary for her support. She had asked nothing of her father since her departure from home, but he had sent her occasional remittances; she must now learn to do without. She must earn her bread, and the shelter for her homeless head, with her own unaided hands. She must do all this, no matter how severely it taxed her strength and pride, unless she renounced the decision she had made, and returned to the Communion in whose full faith her hoary-headed father had died. Then money and lands would be hers, and the estate—which was willed, wholly and without reserve, to several charitable and missionary societies, unless her renunciation was made within a year from her father's death—pass undisputed into her hands.

It was not to fight against temptation, nor

to seek out, if possible, a plausible excuse for yielding to it, that Agnes Ryland remained in the lonely school-room so long. She was not tempted, and had not been since the first reading of the Will, nor was she alarmed and mortified by the new and trying situation in which she was placed. She had health and ability to labor, an unfailing self-reliance, and above all, a fixed faith, nothing could shake or remove. But she was in sore need of comfort. The weakest place in her armor was her love for Roscoe Field, and her wounds were bleeding afresh that moment from thoughts of him. There was a letter in her bosom she dared not read,—a miniature she had not ventured to gaze upon for many a day. The letter was the last she had received from him,—it seemed strangely possible, it was the last he would ever indite to her. He was to sail for Europe on the morrow. For a year or more, at the least, the wide sea would be between them, and God only knew what else might intervene. Had she not been the cause of the cruel separation, rending the heart of them both,—had she not been unjust, untrue to him, as well as herself? What profit would arise from her self-imposed penance,—what result, save a life of loneliness and regret? Would the separation soften his unbelieving heart? or would it repel him from a system demanding such unfeeling sacrifice? Was it

not rather her duty to have clung to him, gone with him, and, after striving 'until death them did part,' to convince him, by God's help, of his error? If she had failed, would not her condemnation have been less than then? But it was too late to recall him, and would she ever have the courage to read again the tear-blotted pages, of the sad, passionate, half-reproachful letter in her bosom. For the first time during the struggle, her heart proved cowardly and condemned her, and her breast writhed with the poignancy of its despair. She fell upon her knees, and called upon the Lord, and he heard her.

She had fastened the door after Alice and Mary's departure, to prevent an unwelcome intrusion, although when the storm began, she had ceased to apprehend any; therefore she was startled, when her prayer was interrupted by some one trying the latch, and then by loud and repeated knocking. She hastened to open the door, hoping the twilight would conceal the signs of her weeping.

It was a little brother of Alice Leigh, who often did errands for Agnes, and carried her letters to and from the post-office. He was dripping with wet, and breathless from speed. He nervously unbuttoned his coat, and began fumbling in an outside pocket, talking rapidly, and in a high, excited key.

"It came in the telegraph, and they told me

to run with it as fast as I could. I went up to your boarding-house, and to half the houses in the village, before I came across Alice, and she said you were here."

Agnes seized, and quickly read the despatch, and then, according to Willie's description—which was well circulated throughout the village before the morning—"she turned as white as a ghost, and, shaking so she could hardly stand, put on her bonnet and shawl, and hurried off in the rain, without having said a word." He followed her to the Rectory, where she stopped but a moment, and from there to her boarding-house; and not a half hour after, the minister's carriage took her to the cars,—an amount of information speedily employed in building up remarkable conjectures.

The despatch was from Boston. Roscoe Field was lying at death's door, having met with a severe and dangerous accident. He requested her to come to him immediately. With surprising calmness, she instantly decided what to do. Informing Mr. Brown, the rector of the parish and superintendent of the school, of the necessity of her suspending her duties as teacher for a while, promising to send some one immediately to fill her place, if possible, she proceeded directly to Litchfield to advise with Mr. Bellamy, resolved to start for Boston before the breaking of another morning, unless he pre-

sented some great and insurmountable obstacle in the way of her undertaking such a journey.

She reached the Rectory at an early hour, and surprised the happy circle in the library, in the centre of which was Ellen Butler, by her unexpected appearance. The children did not recognize her in her mourning-dress, but both Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy were confident, as soon as they beheld her, that she had come to them laden down with some new and bitter sorrow. Agnes did not find it difficult to unfold to their sympathizing hearts the story of her grief. Her intention to hasten to Boston was warmly approved, but they could not consent to her taking the journey alone, and meeting the stern trial, seemingly awaiting her, unsustained by the presence of friends.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy would accompany her; they had dear friends in Boston, and their desire to see them was not a minor inducement to the sudden journey. Ellen Butler gladly consented to take charge of the Tolland school until Agnes should return, promising not to win the hearts of the pupils entirely from their former teacher. Had there not been a great but gradual change in Ellen during the last few months, Agnes would not have chosen her to receive her little charge. Those unacquainted with Ellen might have failed in discovering that change, so slow and concealed

was its progress. It had been revealed to Agnes—but not by open confession on Ellen's part—in the long letters she received from her, without fail, every fortnight. She had carefully watched the tender germ that sprang up unexpectedly in the dry, stony soil, trembling lest some rude touch should destroy it forever. It grew but slowly—the precious, fragile plant—a harsh breath would have blighted it, and made the spot barren of verdure again; therefore Agnes was thankful when she learned that Mr. Bellamy's hand was shielding and gently training the bud of such rare promise and hope. Ellen herself was not fully aware of the change she had undergone; she had given way to the influence—sought it; her bitterness, unrest, and unbelief had become distasteful; she had yearned for the peace and repose that were softly, almost imperceptibly stealing upon her. Every Sunday, was it fair or foul, she was at St. Paul's Chapel, in the pew Carrie Seabury had vacated. She went often to the Rectory and read the minister's books, and made Mrs. Bellamy the example she wished to imitate.

As Agnes had expected, they found Roscoe Field in a most melancholy and dangerous condition—his life despaired of by his medical attendant, and every hope of recovery given up by himself. The horses attached to the carriage which was conveying him to the steamer, on

the day of his intended departure, had taken fright, and he was dashed upon the pavement, and taken up for dead. With the first breath of returning consciousness, he had begged of his attendants to despatch the telegram which had brought Agnes speedily to his side. In his delirium he had constantly raved of her, and he was wildly importuning them to hasten and bring her to him when she entered the room, and, dumb with agony suppressed, bent over his pillow. He recognized her the instant he beheld her, and wept in her arms like a little child.

And could he not live? Was there no hope for him then, with her soothing presence to administer to his wants, catch his faintest whisper, and anticipate his slightest wish? He had yielded up the sweet hope of life, but at the sight of her it burst out afresh, and he struggled and rebelled against the thought of death. And had she the power to soothe him?—with all the strength her prayers could win from heaven, was she able to quiet and prepare him for the long, dread slumber she believed to be coldly creeping upon him, stealing him from her embrace? To doubt was to fail;—with God's arm she would struggle for the victory.

The morning after their arrival he was much worse; apparently sinking fast; yet his mind was clear, though evidently distressed. He had

talked with Agnes a little during the night, though speaking with difficulty, dwelling seriously upon the great change he believed would separate them very soon. He expressed no fear of death, of the utter darkness towards which his unwilling feet were tending, yet was unable to suppress the desire that he could have possessed the Christian faith, for the light and comfort it gives its believers upon their death-beds. He begged her to tell him of what *she* saw, with the eye of faith, beyond the dark river; of the Light of the Lamb; the river of Life, pure as crystal; the wall, and the precious stones thereof; the golden streets; the white-robed saints; all of the sweet old story his mother used to tell. With his hand clasped tightly around the trembling little palm that lay on his breast, he listened entranced to the soft, low voice over his pillow, until, half dreaming, he beheld the New Heaven and the New Earth, the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down from God, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.

"I believed it all once," he faintly murmured, "but it has gone from me now. I cannot make it real again."

She sang, at his request, the cradle-songs his mother sang over his pillow, and then the good old hymns he heard in church when a boy.

There was one he loved best of all ; his mother
tried to sing it a little while before she died ;
—and Agnes sang :

“ Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the waves of trouble roll,
While the tempest still is nigh.

All my trust on Thee is stay'd,
All my hope from Thee I bring ;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.”

When her voice ceased, his eyelids lay heavy upon his cheeks, a tranquil smile overspread his face, and so faint was his breathing, it was difficult for her to persuade herself that the spirit had not fled. The night wasted drearily, slowly away, while she sat there watching, waiting, and praying. He slept until the sunshine streamed through the shutters' chinks, and the noise of the bustling street awoke.

Upon awaking, his eyes sought quickly for the dear face he loved, and fastened with sad fondness upon it. It was a gaze of hopeless sorrow ; and when Agnes met it, her strength proved traitorous to the chill of what she thought to be the long-dreaded moment, and, sinking upon her knees, she buried her face in his pillow. He pressed her forehead to his cheek, and, in the awful suspense which followed, she heard him faintly, brokenly, whispering the prayer his

mother had taught him—the “ Our Father ” his lips had almost forgotten.

Ah, that was a glad hour in Agnes Ryland's life, and would have been ever remembered as such, even if it had been draped in the darkness of death. But the Angel of Life met his brother Angel upon the threshold of the sick chamber, and bade him call not yet for that mortal's soul, for the chorus of heaven were rejoicing in the hope of his repentance.

And now, what more have I to tell you? Only a few scattering threads to weave in, and the story is done.

A month or more afterwards, when Agnes and Mrs. Bellamy returned to Litchfield, they had an invalid in their care, who was welcomed to the Rectory as to his own home. All the summer time he was one of that happy family—the brotherly friend of the Rector, the son of the good mother, and the hero of the children, and, as every one knew, the lover of Agnes Ryland, who still taught the parish-school at Tolland. With so great an amount of Christian influence bearing upon him, are you surprised to learn, that in the following autumn, when the sacred rite of Confirmation was administered at St. Paul's, Roscoe Field knelt humbly with the little company “ that did there in the presence of God and the congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow made at their Baptism ! ”

The bridal took place a month afterwards,—in October, when the year puts on its crown. It was glad and tearful, as bridals always must be, and though many fond hearts ached sorely when Agnes left them to follow her husband to their new and distant home, it was not without the unwavering assurance, that God's blessing would go and abide with them.

Poor Mollic Raymond! I would choose to close my story with saying something happier than can be said of her. As Agnes prophesied, that fierce fire burnt out her heart, and now, hollow and cold, it throbs but for the world and the things of the world—scoffing most at the cheat, whose mockery she dearly proved.

THE END.

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