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A SEQUEL TO

"SUMMER DRIFTWOOD."

BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS WORK.

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THE WINTER FIRE

A SEQUEL TO

"SUMMER DRIFT-WOOD."

BY

ROSE PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "FOUNDATIONS; OR, CASTLES IN THE AIR;" "UPLANDS AND
LOWLANDS," ETC., ETC.



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"What fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought—proof against all adversity. Bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us—houses,—built without hands, for our souls to live in."—RUSKIN.

"The heart that leans on Christ keeps its childhood always; living in One Presence, the whole world is flooded with light; small joys are sweet, as they were in 'angel-infancy,' and even troubles, lose their power to break the calm."

"For a diary, slight arches will suffice to convey the day's freight across; the lighter these, the speedier and more graceful the transit."

THE WINTER FIRE.

I.

YESTERDAY, Christmas morning, grandpapa called me to him, and forgetting that I am no longer a child (for grandpapa always is forgetting how old I am, twenty-five my last birthday, old as an old woman it seems to me): "Child," he said, "I want you to bring me, next Christmas, if I am here on earth, or if I have gone Home I want you to complete it just the same, some record of what the last six years have been to you, something like that summer-time diary we called your 'Summer Drift-wood;' for I want to know why the drift-wood has not been consumed during these six years—why it is still burning with warmth enough to make so cheery a winter

fire as your life is to your grandpapa, and all who love you. What is the secret of it, Annie child?"

Grandpapa knows the secret,—he knows, too, when I came to the last page of that brief diary, I said, I never would keep another.

And yet I cannot say nay to grandpapa, he so seldom asks a favor; but I shrink from the task he has set me. It will be so hard to unravel the threads of memories that are interwoven with so much that seems to belong only just to me.

Then, too, I do not like diaries, they are so wont to make one think of self, and self is what I want to forget. I feel as though, if I do as grandpapa wishes, I will forget, perhaps, "that we are to look to the Fountain of our growth, and not to the mysterious process going on within us;" forget, too, that saying of McCheyne's, "For one look at self take ten looks at Christ."

When I told grandpapa so, he smiled, and replied: "Child, it is not yourself I want

you to think of as you write, but what those looks at Christ have revealed to you these six by-gone years."

Have I taken the looks?

Ever since grandpapa's words, that question has been asking itself over and over in my heart.

Surely if I had, the years that stretch behind me would seem like a garden of blooming flowers, rather than a patch where weeds and briars grow intermingled with blossoms.

But I am falling straightway into the very thing I am to avoid, looking backward and thinking of self, rather than upward and thinking of Christ. Thinking of Christ! It is the only way I can keep the fire blazing; for surely if I tend the flame, it must not be with the charred, burnt-out wood of yesterday, but with fresh logs for to-day; and for every day He gives a new supply; yet it always seems to come in a mystical way, from the drift-wood garnered, that rich, beautiful summer of my life.

Sometimes I think the comforts that came into my heart then, the hopes and joys, were every one touched with that power of increase that kept the widow's meal ever sufficient, the oil in her lamp ever enough for the needed flame. They multiply and unfold so wondrously the comforts Christ gives, like buds of spring that burst forth into flower when the sunbeams fall on them; so these heart-comforts spring up into life from the shining of His love.

But there have been dark times—oh! so dark—since that summer; for, after a great sorrow, it takes such a long while to really grasp the full meaning of the grief.

I remember those first days, the very first days after I knew Jack had gone, even the love of Christ seemed hidden; but close on to them came blessed days, when the darkness was brightened by Christ's felt-love and nearness—the love which has been ever since the same, but which, in many a dull after-hour, I have found it so much

harder to realize than I found it then. I remember, too, those first months after Jack was called from earth, how I felt like a child who, startled by the flashing lightning and the thunder's roar, hides his head on his mother's bosom, only looking up far enough to see that mother's face bending over him in love—just so I felt safe and sheltered, knowing Jack was safe too, for he was with Christ.

But, not hiding from life's cares, but going forth to meet them, would the Heavenly Father have His child; and so I tried to go, finding, at first, comfort in the very effort; but there came a time when I longed to creep back again into the shelter of the Father's arms, for sometimes I could not feel their pressure so close about me when I mingled with the busy, outside world.

Yet, spite this, they told me—Aunt Mary and papa—that I had grown more cheerful because of the effort.

I wonder whether it is always so with

sorrow; the more wanted we seem to become to it outwardly, the deeper it seems to sink into our hearts! I wonder whether the grief we grow silent about as time passes, does not, like still water places, hold a deeper, truer reflection of what that sorrow really is; just as the quiet water tells more truly the story of the bank-side beauty, than it does when ripples and wavelets stir the smooth surface.

I was so unlearned then in the real meaning of the words, "Patient continuance." Indeed, I only half know it now, for when heavy clouds hide the blue sky, even yet I strain my eyes for a rift in the clouds, rather than just going on cheerfully doing my work, remembering that clouds can only veil, not destroy the blue. But it is not of sorrow I am to write, but of peace and almost joy; so I will fold over this first leaf of my new diary, and to-morrow begin a fresh page, though, if I do as grandpapa wishes, many leaves of this record cannot tell of what the world calls

gladness, yet they will all be, I think, though "sorrowing, yet rejoicing" pages; for surely I have learned that

"Over all our tears, God's rainbow bends,
To all our cries, a pitying ear He lends."

11.

I WONDER why I linger so in writing of the changes that came to us that first year after Jack had gone. I suppose one reason is, they bewilder me, as I try to recall them; and yet, when those changes came, they seemed almost natural, and as a matter of course, not at all as they do now, when I think of writing them out.

Among those days, many of which are "wrapt in dense cloud," there are some that stand out with the radiance of pictures painted in warm, life-like colors. Days, which my memory links in that fellowship of poets' dream-words and prosaic real life;—that fellowship which blends and softens so much of the rough material in our heart's store-house, with Tennyson's verse—

"Sometimes a little corner shines,
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pine."

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For we did have bright corners in our darkened skies even then—we did have glimpses of sunlit heights.

But I must not fill my page thus, when it is of the "Picture Days" I am to tell.

Picture days! I wonder whether all lives are as full of them as mine?

First of my pictures in that year came the "Group of Days," of which Aunt Mary's marriage was the centre.

I do not know why, but I never had thought of the possibility of her marrying. I knew there was a tender story that haloed her life with gentleness and sympathy for all who needed it; I knew she had cast away from her, in her early youth, a great and longed-for happiness, because, by this self-sacrifice, she had helped others; but all the story was wrapped in a veil of mystery, and indeed, part of it is now, for Auntie hinted to me scarce more than the outline (which papa had told me before). She always so hesitated in speaking of herself, and what she withheld I would not ask

either papa or grandpapa; for when any one gives us their confidence in part, the asking another to tell the "skipped lines," seems to me as dishonorable as it would be to read from the open page of a letter a trustful friend holds before us, so that, with one glance, we could grasp its import, and yet our friend reads us but a sentence now and then.

I have felt thus, ever since I sat one twilight, not long before Aunt Mary's wedding-day, hearkening to the bits she revealed to me from the closely-written pages of her life's book.

There is something so sacred in listening to one who tells their heart-story in this fragmentary way,

"When broken words are clues to many thoughts."

But I am wandering again from the picture-days I began to write of.

It is so strange how mornings dawn, just like their yester-morns, and yet each one that comes is freighted with a new gift.

For I think *all* that comes to us is a gift; and if we remember that talismanic verse, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father,"—though it be a sorrow, it will be illumined with the light of His loving care; and if a joy, why surely it will be lit up with greater brightness, because He who "Careth for us" sent it.

It is so restful, this feeling that all troubles may be "Blessing-sorrows," just as all gladnesses may be blessing-joys. Oh, I think half the burden of sorrow is lifted, when we remember, "God's love gives in such a way, that it flows from a Father's heart, the well-spring of all good; and the heart of the giver makes the gift dear and precious. So among ourselves we say of only a trifling gift, 'It comes from a hand we love, and we look not so much on the gift as the giver.'"

This is why I think the humblest gifts oftentimes are the most precious; the most helpful too, like the troubles that often uplift us into a higher life than joy might have

led to. And yet, the "Joy angel" seems to me one of the sweetest, surest pointers towards God, of all the winged messengers He sends forth on errands of love to His children. But, perhaps, joy seems to me such a precious guide, because it was during that summer so richly laden with happiness, that I first learned to know something of Christ—only something, for the knowledge of Him is always increasing. Always—the little word stretches far on, till we lose it in the endless word, Eternity; for surely the law of growth prevails there, in the Father's House, as well as here. It is so wonderful to think, always we may be growing, and yet, never can we exhaust the love and perfect knowledge.

Sometimes I wonder, will this increase of knowledge be one of our greatest joys in heaven? But I am only a woman, and somehow, knowledge is not what I want so much as love and service. I think no verse soothes me like the one, "They shall serve Him day and night." Serving Christ with

no wandering heart, no sin stealing in to interfere, no self-chosen errands, but serving with a pure and holy love—a love that He directs.

But this thought of never-ending progress, when I first realized it, my heart shut down against it, for it seemed so to divide me from Jack, and from my mother, too. This thought—of all the years she has been in heaven, learning all the time; and of Jack, who knew Christ when he went home to Him, so much better than I do even now;—surely I felt if every day he, Jack, has ascended from "height to height" in the heavenly knowledge, he must have passed a way up into some high class in that upper school; while I must enter, as a child, scarce able to find the alphabet letters in the language of Divine Love. And thus I will be all divided from him, by this wide expanse of knowledge, to him plain, but to me mystery. It was when my heart was sorrowing because of this feeling that I seemed to hear, like the strain of far-off music, a gentle

voice whispering: "Not so, my child." Fear not, for though as there is a difference among the stars, so will there be among the saints after this life, "When God crowns His gifts in man," yet you can never know loneliness, never feel separated from Christ or those you love, when the Lord calls you to come and walk with Him and them, amid the "pastures ever green, and beside the waters ever still."

Just as I thought this, moved by a sudden impulse, I went to the window and pushed back the curtain to look out on the night—a dark night; the only light the stars, that shone all the brighter because the moon had set. As I stood there I perfectly understood the perplexity that had troubled me, for the stars that are the brightest, the largest, the most true reflectors of the one great Light, are those which seem the nearest to us, those which give the most light. Just as the increase of knowledge, the radiancy of love that enfolds those who go Home long before we do, will

not divide them from us, but only help to reveal to us more light, more knowledge; only help to lift our eyes up higher and nearer to the One to whom they are so near. And then it dawned upon me with a brightness like sunrise, when every cloud is edged with golden hues, the thought, that as the gift of immortality holds for us the gift of individuality, so that sweetest of all our spirit companions, Hope, will go with us (though I know some say "Hope is translated into *having* there") Home, to that land where it will lead upward and onward ever; where the unveiling of one glory will but point to another, the satisfying of one aspiration but serve to awake another, and thus, every passing hour, we will be learning more and more of that "Peace which passeth all understanding." Since that night, Christ and heaven, my mother and Jack, have seemed so much nearer to me; my heart always calls the thoughts that came to me then, flowers that bloomed in a Revelation hour. Are Revelation hours, I

wonder, always near us, if we only look behind the mist of our own doubts and little faith?

III.

I HAVE brought my pen and ink down into the library, that I may write a page or two in my little book, while grandpapa is taking his after-dinner nap. I often wonder whether he really does sleep during these times, that I call his rest hours. When I asked him a few minutes ago, he smiled, and said: "'Rest hours!' Is that what you call these quiet times of mine, child? Sometimes I think them my 'Best hours.' " And he closed his eyes as a sign that he wanted to be still.

So I will straightway begin to write, for I am determined to-day to tell of Aunt Mary's wedding-time, without once roving off into other thoughts. But one thought always so leads me on to another, I sometimes think our minds are like the Mayflowers in Spring; we see one little waxen blossom,

gleaming through the green leaves, and, as we stoop to pick it, we find a whole cluster, and the cluster, it is but the herald of other clusters.

But, alas! all our thoughts are not flower thoughts, though, I suppose, they would be if our hearts were pure and holy; for out of the heart cometh thoughts.

I am wandering again from the March day, when the joy came to Aunt Mary. I remember we sat down together, almost immediately after breakfast, to prepare work for the class of little girls who were to come that afternoon for their sewing lesson. Aunt Mary talked of the children, of the desolate homes they came from, of their improvement, the tiny stitches in one piece of work, the knotted thread of another. And all the time, while she sat there so quietly, gladness was coming nearer and nearer to her. Yet, when the door-bell rang, she did not start, nor did the announcement, "A gentleman wants to see you, Miss Mary," cause one ripple of expectancy to light up her

face, or to tremble in her voice, as all unconsciously she went forth to meet—so much. I took but little thought of her absence, I was so busy with the work; for though it was only fitting bits of colored calico into blocks for the children to make into a quilt, it interested me. Indeed, ever since I was a tiny child, a patch-work quilt has been to me a sort of mute poem. I can recall now, the summer visit I made Aunt Stella, how I used to wake up early in the morning, when the house was still, when the only sound was the singing of the birds, as they flew from tree-top to tree-top, and when the rays of the rising sun broke into a thousand rippling beams, that danced and played on the white walls, as they stole through the branches of the great maple just outside my window. I would lay with wide-open eyes, in a yet half dreamy mood, weaving stories about the different bits that some patient hand had pieced into a coverlet for my bed. It was as gay, that coverlet, as Joseph's many-

colored coat; there were strips of bright red, and bands of green, broken by tiny white blocks and diamond-shaped blue patches, stars of yellow, with an intermingling of quieter shades, restful drabs and sober browns. Some bits were worn and faded, others looked fresh and new; some, Aunt Stella told me, were of dresses that had been hers when a child; and one block she looked at long and tenderly—so tenderly, that when she turned away, there were tears in her eyes. I think it must have been a scrap of some frock that had belonged to her girlhood days.

I was so glad to find out, as I did, not long ago, that I am not the only person that feels thus toward these old-fashioned quilts.

It was one afternoon last week, I was busy preparing work for my sewing-class (for I did not give it up after Aunt Mary married, or when we moved into this out-of-the-way part of the town), when a friend of papa's called, a professor in one of the Eastern colleges. He asked me, "Why I

was so busy?" And I told him—told him, too, though it did seem childish, my fancy for patch-work. To which he laughingly replied:

"I am in perfect sympathy with your feeling, Miss Annie," and, taking up a piece of calico, he added: "Just think of the history that belongs to this little thing, and, in answer to your thought, you have a poem! Think of the hand that drew the pattern—a tired, hard-working hand perchance, whose only cunning was the making of designs for—nothing but ten-penny calico.—And yet that hand worked with effort as earnest as the hand of an artist, who leaves upon canvas a glowing picture."

"Who knows," he continued, "but in some home of poverty, this little pattern, that won scarcely more of a recompense than enough to supply a scanty meal, was looked upon with loving, admiring eyes."

It was nothing but a rose half opened, a rose on a thorny stem, such great thorns, all out of proportion to the tiny pink flow-

er. But I think it was the thorns that made it a pathetic thing to that grave man of thought.

I wonder whether it is always thus: that the loftier and more cultivated the mind, the more ready the heart becomes to take notice of the insignificant labor of another. Surely, through the glimpses that we sometimes have of this warm sympathy in human hearts, we may learn something of how God smiles, in tenderness and approbation, on the weak efforts of His children.

Afterwards papa's friend explained to me the many processes needful in the making of even such a trifling thing as a bit of calico. He ended by saying:

"I never have forgotten the patch-work quilt in my grandmother's spare-room, where I slept one night when a boy."

And he laughed, as we so often do, when some memory wakes up other memories that we would fain not unveil before strangers' eyes—the quick little laugh that is sister to a sigh.

After dinner he came to me, and said:

"Miss Annie, why do not ladies keep their diaries in a more secret fashion than by writing them out? Why do they not have a little book, in which to save scraps of their different gowns? Think what tales they would tell; especially if the first pages contained bits of the dresses worn in early childhood, tiny blocks of faint pink and blue; followed by girlhood pages, with its blocks of deep sky blue, and of rosy hues, in place of faint pink; and then would come those of early womanhood, telling their story in delicate greens, violet and amber shades, while the matron's page would shine with warm crimsons and rich purples; and for old age there would be tender grays—silvery grays. Tell me, do you not think such a diary would be full of memories?"

I could but reflect, as he ceased speaking, how in some lives almost every page would be marked by a block of colorless black.

But grandpapa is waking up, and I must write no more to-day.

IV.

THIS morning I will be resolute, and dropping all the stitches of yesterday's thoughts, just tell of Aunt Mary and nothing else. I remember she was absent from the room for full two hours. I had finished preparing the work, but lingered, before going up-stairs, to gather a half-blown rose to send the mother of one of my little scholars—a poor woman who was slowly wasting with consumption.

It looked so beautiful, the rose smiling out from the green leaves which encircled it. Hearing Auntie entering the room, I held it up, eagerly exclaiming:

"See! is it not lovely?" But looking at her as I spoke, I forgot all about my rose, for there was something in Aunt Mary's face I never had seen there before.

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"Come to me, Annie," she said, "I have something to tell you, child."

And yet she did not tell me a word for many minutes—she just held me in her arms, kissing me tenderly, while she smoothed the hair back from my forehead, as had been her wont when I was a little girl. Presently she said:

"Annie, a friend of mine has come—a friend I had not seen for many years; a friend who wants me in a month or two to go away from you all."

And Auntie's voice sank almost to a whisper, as she added:

"And,—I have told him I will go, child. Think, he has been waiting—waiting years for me!"

Twice she repeated the word waiting—the little word so laden with many meanings; for we are almost all waiting in this life for something.

What is it?—

I could not say anything in reply, but "Oh, Auntie!" But I don't think she much

cared for words just then; for, almost as though speaking to herself, she continued:

"And, Annie, he does not think me so much changed,—but then—"

And Auntie laughed a light-hearted laugh, glad as a bird-song, as she said:

"He never did know much about my looks and such things."

And Auntie, my quiet, middle-aged Aunt Mary, looked up with flushed cheek and sparkling eyes.

Just for a minute I could but wonder, Does the beauty and the gladness never die out of the heart, even though it be all covered up for years? Can the touch of love light it right up into shining again? And—self always will creep into my thoughts—I could but wonder, too, if Jack could come back,—if some voice, tender and miracle-working, like the Voice that bade the sleeping Lazurus, whose bed was a rock-girt tomb, "Come forth," could say to those cold, cruel waves that closed so ruthlessly over the human form of Jack,

"Give up your treasure," and Jack came and stood beside me, and I could hear his voice—the voice so unlike any other voice,—could feel once again the warm, strong clasp of his hand,—such a different hand-clasp from any other;—would I seem the same to him? Would all the shadows of the long years, since he left me, fade away in a moment?

Only a second it took for me to feel this; for thought, it is such a lightning messenger, flashing from east to west in our heart's horizon in a moment; and, even while I thought, Auntie was speaking.

"Come, dear, my friend is longing to see you, my little, motherless Annie."

I seemed to take it all in, then, that "the friend" was the one who had made the gladness of Auntie's young love-dream.

The beautiful dream from which she had awoke, because unwilling to leave papa, grandpapa, Fred, and baby me,—we were so helpless after my mother died.—But now I was no longer a child (oh! I sometimes so

wished those days that I were), and they knew that I would always stay with grand papa and papa; for, since Jack had gone, everything in life had so changed to me; and while many among my friends—outside friends—said, even in those days, "Why, Annie, life will open again for you; the fallen buds of one spring do not blight the flowers of the next," my own heart, and those who knew and loved me best, knew I never could have another *real* spring-time, though I might find many a flower in life; they well knew that I felt then, as I do now, though it is six years ago since it all happened—a life-time almost as I look back upon it—that home, with papa and grand-papa, is my happiest place.

So it happened that, just in going to the library, I realized Auntie, feeling it really better for me the being necessitated to make an effort for others, would leave us; and I know it was, though at first it seemed hard—so hard; and yet how often I have been glad and thankful it all came when it

did I wonder if we do not always live to be thankful for the having to make efforts for other people? I remember somewhere reading these lines, these solemn, profoundly true lines:

"For who gives, giving, doth win back his gift;
And knowledge, by division, grows to more;
Who hides the Master's talent shall die poor,
And starve at last of his own thankless thrift.

"Give thyself utterly away. Be lost.
Choose some one—something; not thyself, thine own;
Thou canst not perish, but, thrice greater grown,—
Thy gain the greatest where thy loss was most.

"Thou in another shalt thyself new find,
The single globule, lost in the wide sea,
Becomes an ocean. Each identity
Is greatest in the greatness of its kind.

"Who serves for gain, a slave, by thankless pelf
Is paid; who gives himself, is priceless, free;
I give myself, a man, to God; Lo He
Renders me back a saint unto myself."

If Auntie's friend had not come the year he did, I know she would never have left us; for it was only a twelvemonth later that

papa failed, and after that, I am sure she would not have gone.

I remember once, when I was a young girl, coming into the library and interrupting a talk she and grandpapa were having, just as she was saying: "No, dear father, do not persuade me; God gave me my father before He gave me my friend. Let me do my first duty first; and if the time ever comes when you do not need me, then we will talk of this again."

"Do my first duty first!" These words of Aunt Mary's so tell the secret of her consistent, tranquil life. I wish I could learn it—the quiet way of doing the nearest and the first things, rather than reaching out after farther-off and greater things than the little close duties.

Mr. Grafton (Auntie's friend) was standing before the fire when we entered the room, talking earnestly to grandpapa; but he turned instantly on hearing us, and, coming forward, said in such a kindly voice, "And so this is little Annie?" that I loved him

right away. And then, great strong man though he was, his eyes filled with tears as he stooped and kissed me. I suppose it was my black frock and pale, sad face—for I did look sad, though I tried not to. I suppose, too, he contrasted his joy, the joy he had so long waited for, with my loneliness. But perhaps, because they were so old, both middle-aged people, the calm happiness of Aunt Mary and Mr. Grafton never gave me one pang—of what shall I call it?—not envy. No! I know it was not that. The feeling that would steal into my heart the first months after Jack left, when I saw Fred and May together,—and—the feeling—oh! it will come sometimes yet. Why, oh! why, does it take so long to really and truly say from the heart, at *all* times, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Even yet my heart will shiver and tremble when I look back,—when I look forward, too. But I must not linger in this little book over such feelings, just as I must not linger in my life over brooding on the past

or dreaming of the future, for the present is the only time really mine; neither must I linger over the busy days of preparation that preceded Auntie's wedding, which took place early in April. A quiet wedding; only just her dearest friends assembled towards noon-time in the library, which looked just the same as it always did, except for the wealth of flowers, that made the air fragrant with the perfume of roses and violets; except for the sounding of those words that made life such a different thing to the two bound together—"Till death do part."

Half an hour after, 'mid smiles and tears, the "good-byes" were said, and Aunt Mary went forth from the dear old home in which she had been such a comfort to us all.

Papa and Fred accompanied them down to the steamer, for they sailed immediately away over the broad ocean. They did not ask me to go for this last farewell; indeed, they were all tenderly mindful of how it hurt me to even think of the wild water,

the cruel water, that had hidden Jack from me.

I was alone with Mr. Grafton for a few minutes just before Auntie left, and then he told me more than I had ever known of the beautiful devotion of her life to others.

I have often wondered since, Could it have been a mistake, that self-sacrifice of Auntie's? Sometimes I think such sacrifices are; and yet, remembering her, as she stood beside Mr. Grafton that marriage morning, one could but feel she, and he, too, had learned rich, beautiful life-lessons during those years of waiting, when their happiness was hidden from them, when all they knew of the future was—

"It sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known."

V.

THE evening after Auntie's wedding, grandpapa and I sat together in the library, talking of the many things one is wont to leave unsaid at mid-day, the things that seem almost consecrated to the time—

"Between the dark and the light,
When the night is beginning to lower ;"

When there

"Comes a pause in the day's occupations."

I wonder what we would do without this twilight time, the rest-hour, that comes with the closing day. To me it holds the same relationship to the busy twelve hours of the week-day, that Sunday holds to the toilsome six days of week-time. There is, too, such a beautiful significance in the varying influences of twilight, which seem

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penetrated with the spirit of the changing seasons. They are so different, the emotions that stir our hearts on a mid-summer's twilight, from those that come in the winter's gloaming hour. In summer it always seems heralded by the dawning of

"A more solemn brilliance o'er the sky,
A meaning more intense upon the air,
The inspiration of the dying day."

Seeming as though

"A gentle air among the cloudlets passed,
And fanned away the crimson, then curled
The yellow poppies in the fields, and cast
A dimness in the grasses, for it furled
Their daisies."

While in the winter

"The darkness seems to fall from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight."

And there comes

"A feeling of sadness, and longing,
That is not akin to pain ;
And resembles sorrow only,
As the mist resembles the rain."

The spring-time twilight—it is all unlike the ending of an autumn day ; but, at all these times, the fading light is ever tender. Tender as love, that broods over an erring child, whose errings it would fain blot out, by winning the child to say, “ I am sorry.” And at that hour it is so much easier to confess a wrong, just as it is easier to tell a sorrow when the light is dim, and our tears are hidden from all eyes but the Heavenly One, who counteth all tears.

I so wish those who write books full of imaginings of the “ Beulah Land,” would enter more into harmony with the softened spirit of the twilight ; for, at best, all books telling of the joys and beauties of that land, must be imaginings. It seems so strange why no voice has ever come back to us to *really* tell of the There. So strange that so often the most precious truths and consolations of the gospel story, are those which are shadowy as twilight, only half revealing the land which “ doth not yet appear.”

At first, after Jack went to that Upper Home, I used to feel a restless longing to read book after book that told of heaven, even though they did not comfort me ; books that pictured the beauty of that land, books that told of the satisfaction there of all our longings and aspirations, that gave the music-loving soul a heaven of sweet sounds ; the art-loving, a heaven of beautiful colors ; the thought-desiring, a heaven of perfect knowledge. But how they wearied me, those written pages, that so vainly strove to light up the places only the “ Spirit ” can light up. How sweet it was to sink back like a tired child, into the bosom of mystery, content to know just what the Bible promises—that there are many mansions in the Father’s house — places — homes prepared for us ; that Christ said, “ Where I am, there ye shall be also.”

It may be I am all mistaken in my feeling, but it does seem to me, if Christ had meant us to know the full particulars of the afterwards of the immortal life, He would

have told us. It seems to me, too, that we have no earthly words full and beautiful enough in which to frame the heavenly glory. And, perhaps, this is why St. Paul said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him." Like Christ! Just those two words; surely *they* are a revelation of heaven.

I think, too, this is why St. Paul gives no description of what he saw when caught up into the seventh heaven; and why Lazarus left no recorded word, telling of the wonders he beheld those silent days when the body slept, but when we would fain believe, the spirit woke—woke into vision all unlike our earthly beholding.

The few Bible words that do picture heaven, they are such halo words, we cannot penetrate to see the full light beyond, and yet the halo-glory is so beautiful. Think! It tells of a "river;" but not a river such as we know, a river fed by mountain streamlets. No; it is a River that flows

from the Throne of God. It tells of a tree; but a tree all unlike the perishable trees of earth, for this is a "Tree of Life, every leaf for the healing of the nations." It tells of light; but not the shining, dazzling radiance our earth-born eyes call sunlight, but a light that is the "Light of the Lamb."

I told grandpapa, sitting there in the twilight—leaning my head against his knee, while his dear old hand so tenderly smoothed the hair from my forehead—how it rested me, the coming back from man's books of consolation, to the simple story written in the Bible. Just as the finding of some little wayside flower will rest and soothe one, after looking on a conservatory full of blooms, brought to rarest perfection by man's culture; or as one feels after walking through a picture gallery, where from every side marvels of beauty and brilliant color greet the gaze; pictures in which the skies are as blue as Italy's skies, and yet wanting the depth of true atmosphere; pictures in which the forest trees are beautiful

as Lebanon cedars, and yet trees in which no singing bird can build its nest; rivers that seem to ripple and shimmer in the light that bathes the glowing canvas, and yet rivers that never can flow onward to the sea; for beautiful though man's description may be of that land beyond, we know no mortal hand can ever uplift one fold of the mysterious curtain that separates earth from heaven. We know, till the mortal is clothed in immortality, as powerless are we to portray its beauty, as the artist's brush is to stir the blade of pictured meadow-grass with a spring-time breeze, or to change sun-set cloud from the rosy to the violet hue. Sometimes it comes over me so, the longing to talk with Jack of these things. I do not think I could quite tell out all that is in my heart when I think of heaven and mystery, heaven and knowledge, to any one but him, not even to grandpapa: but, talking to Jack, it was always so unlike talking to any one else; it always seemed as though we

Each by turn was guide to each,
And fancy light from fancy caught;
And thought leapt out to wed with thought,
Ere thought could wed itself with speech."

It is so wonderful and beautiful to think that Jack knows so much about this glory now.—Six years with Christ! Oh, what happy years for Jack! When I think about them I am almost glad he went, though they have been such long, lonely years to me. But it is late, and I must write no more—late, and I have not told of my talk that evening with grandpapa. Yet it was much like the thoughts I have been for an hour scribbling down in this little record book. I wonder will grandpapa find one of the reasons he bade me discover, by writing this history, is an outgrowth of just such talks with him—talks that are heralds to thoughts. Dear old grandpapa! his warm, loving heart was so full of tenderness for me that evening, I think he feared the having hearkened to the marriage service, had seemed to me something like the

strewing flowers before a blind man, who could catch the fragrance of their odors, but could not stoop to gather one, for he could not see them, the flowers, though the garden path was full, and though their fragrance was sweet with hints of the beautiful blossoms he had known in his youth, before the darkness came, when never the least primrose, or "wee crimson-tipped daisy," escaped his look. But it had not made me feel so; and yet, I could not keep the tears from falling, when grandpapa said: "Remember, child, 'the simplest faith, be it only deep and trustful—the very smallest idea of a mission in life assigned by God, be it only lovingly and clearly seen—lifteth the poor out of the dust, and to them that hath no might, reneweth strength.'"

Just as grandpapa ceased speaking, came lights and supper, and an end to our quiet talk, just as sleep must come now to end my scribbling.

VI.

CARRIE (Jack's sister) came in this morning, as I was reading over the last pages I wrote yesternight.

"Tell me, what have you been writing?" she asked. And she looked over my shoulder, reading a sentence here and there.

It was thus we fell into talking of those gone home to Heaven. Carrie has never ceased to miss and mourn for Jack, her only brother, though she is cheerful and light-hearted always. I think her cheerfulness comes partly from natural disposition, but more than all, from her child-like trust in Christ. It seems to me, the secret of her life is to be found in her much pondering of those words St. Paul uttered so long ago to them of Corinth: "Let every one, whatever his calling be, *therein* abide with God."

"*Therein* abide with God, would I might ne'er forget,
That evermore I might with Him abide ;
What matter how or where the stamp is set,
Or what the furnace where the gold is tried,
So that the metal has the sterling ring,
So that the likeness of the king is shown."

Carrie's feelings towards those gone Home are not quite like mine, so I will write down what she said, and let it come just after my musings of yesterday ; and then, when grand-papa looks over this brief record, perhaps he will tell me which way he thinks the best, Carrie's or mine. She makes every thing about the future, and those parted from us by mortal death, so much more definite and tangible, in one sense, than I do. While it soothes me to fall back into the arms of mystery, while it rests me to feel Jack is with Christ, and beyond that I cannot definitely know ; so there I try to leave it, even though it is so sweet to think, perhaps, Jack is one of those sent forth to minister, and so is near me all the time. Carrie is made restless by this indefiniteness, and when I said, "I am content to wait for

fuller knowledge as the child waits for added years, to make plain the many puzzling questions of childhood," she shook her head, almost impatiently replying :

"I want more, and I think we may have more." And then she rested her head upon her hand, while a far-away look came into her eyes. Presently she asked :

"What do you think it means, Annie—the being 'Compassed about with a cloud of witnesses?' What is a cloud but a something 'made up of millions of dew and rain-drops, stricken through by the rays of rising and setting suns.' Rain and dew-drops that were drawn up from the earth, and in being drawn up, became purified, just as the spirits of those called from us to dwell with the 'King in His beauty,' are purified from all earthly stains, when they enter the land where sin is unknown.

"Think, Annie," she continued, "of a summer morning, when the sun has but just risen, how every grass-blade, every flower, the leaves of every shrub and tree,

are gemmed with shining dew-drops, which vanish as the sun rises—and yet, Have we lost the dew-drops?—Is their mission to earth ended, because we no longer *see* them? Ah, no! their work is never ended, for they will come again to flower and grass, falling in soft showers, or stealing down in gentle dew once more. Thus, it seems to me, it is with those we love who have gone Home; they are hidden from our sight; and when, in some hour of their *felt* nearness, we reach out our hands to grasp their dear hands once again, they have gone, like the dew-drops, that are not, when we would touch them; but still they are ever about us, ever coming to us, on errands of love and tender ministry.”

Carrie was silent for a moment, and then, in softened voice, she said:

“Yes, I would fain believe, though you cannot see Jack, every time a sweet peace steals into your heart, he is close beside you. Ah! when we feel thus—

“How shrunken Jordan seems.”

It was several minutes before Carrie spoke again. She had risen from her seat, and drawn her shawl about her, for “I must go,” she said; and yet she lingered for a second before saying, what was, in fact, but the echo of my own thoughts, for her question was:

“What do you think is the service of the redeemed?” (service, that is what I long for.) “Do you think all their time is praising-time? It seems to me,” she continued, “the hint our Lord gives us of what true life is, would teach rather, that while they praise, they serve, just as He served, just as He went about doing good; so surely He has errands for His redeemed ones, richer, and fuller of *true humanity*, than praising Him by song and anthem could be.”

And then Carrie left me?

True humanity! The words puzzled me. I repeated them to grandpapa, asking:

“Tell me, what do they mean?”

He replied by opening the Bible, and resting his finger on the Genesis verse

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

By and by, grandpapa said:

"The word human, means,' some one writes, 'that which is agreeable to the nature of man; it means, also, merciful, pitiful, loving and kind—qualities that are distinguished attributes of God's nature. We have the testimony of language, that that which is peculiarly and completely human is the Divine.'"

Into my memory, as grandpapa ceased speaking, came the verse that Aunt Mary had traced in my birthday-ring so long ago, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Does it explain what grandpapa and Carrie meant? Oh! if Jack were only here to tell me.

In God's image! Does it mean that we have within us the germ of a better, purer, truer life, than the every-day life we lead, a life that we are all unfaithful to? Does it mean that if we were pure in heart we would see God mirrored in our purity? Does it

mean that we may commune with Him, not by sending our thoughts out, but by drawing them into "the deep centre of our heart, where He has stamped and planted His own image?"

But these thoughts were not the question Carrie gave me to answer. Her query was—

"What did I think the service of those gone home to heaven?"

Surely, if we remember, that God made man in "His own image," and that Christ came to show us that image through the manifestation of His perfect manhood, it would lead us to believe, whatever powers may await us in the far future, to whatever height of being and action we may be lifted, still there can be no loftier seal of God-like creation than this "made in His image;" and the nearer we approach to the perfect example, Christ, the One whose whole earth-life was Love, the more we reflect that image.

Surely, then, errands of love would be

those most apt to engage the redeemed, sent forth to minister, as silent comers, from the silent land, yet bringing to the weary of heart, gifts of consolation—gifts more beautiful and precious than harvest-time fruits are to the toilers of the soil.

My talk with Carrie has seemed to meet and answer the very queries that filled my heart the second day I wrote in this new diary. It is sweet to feel as she does; and yet I have such a weak, wandering heart—I dare not let it dwell too much on this unseen companionship, for it is Christ—only Christ, I would make the central light of my life, just as I would have thoughts of Him make the chief gladness of heaven to me.

VII.

IT is weeks since I wrote in this little diary—weeks since I had the talk with Carrie here recorded; and life, the busy, crowding life of daily duties, pleasures, and sorrows, has been pressing about me all these weeks, with a strength and absorption that has left no time for writing of the past. Indeed, the events of the last few months have convinced me that, if I would complete this record for grandpapa, it must be by leaving the by-gone and writing of the present; for if, as he so lovingly says, there is a “winter fire” burning in my life with a cheery, bright glow, the *present* ought to serve to interpret the *past*, and to plainly tell by *what* and *why*, that flame has been developed and lives.

But, before I write of this *near* time, I

want to put down here, that I may always remember her words, the sequel of my talk with Carrie; and I want, too, to tell of papa's failure, and of our moving to this out-of-the-way little house, that for five years now we have called home; for though I write for no eyes but grandpapa's, I think he will want to know how that time influenced my life, and strengthened my faith in Christ.

But to return to my talk with Carrie. The very next morning she came to say, with a loving kiss and tender smile,

"Annie, dear, I know you are all wrong in your fear that, feeling Jack's nearness to you, will interfere with your giving Christ the first place in your heart."

"It will only bring Jesus nearer," she continued; "just as your love for Jack that summer-time, when first you gave your heart to Christ, intensified and expanded your love for Him, the Lord. For, truly I believe," she went on to say, "we never love an earthly friend, when that love is

held in subordination to love for Christ, without finding our hearts glowing and growing in greater and warmer love toward the Heavenly Friend, who gives us our earthly friends. And so, I think, if you receive the sweet assurance that Jack, though hidden from you, is still near, his nearness a gift from Christ, it will elevate the gift into a perpetual source of up-lifting thoughts."

"The feeling Jack really knows your heart, the thinking he looks lovingly on the good struggling there, will it not make your heart purer and stronger? And yet, dear, while I talk to you thus, I am not unmindful that in all such hopes we are at 'est but

"Infants crying in the night,
Infants crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry!"

"But," and the look that is so like Jack stole over her face, "we do know the great Father who gives us so many gifts that we

never ask for—the Father whose love is tenderer than mother's love for helpless babe" (and there was a smile and a tear on Carrie's face as she uttered that word, and I knew she was thinking of the baby-boy who makes the music in her home, for Carrie has been married two years now), "will give us all we need. So, dear, if you need the knowledge that Jack is not far off, not all separated from you by the silence that men call death,—but that we, and all who know Christ, the Resurrection Lord, call Life,—it will be given to you; and with all our longings and imaginings, we will ever remember, whatever the communion of saints means, 'when the good Shepherd leads His ransomed flock to the delectable mountains of the true land of promise, then we shall say from our hearts, as none can quite say it on this side of the river, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy."'"

VIII.

AND now I must turn backward, and tell of the year after Aunt Mary married. I dread doing it, not that in one sense it was a time of such darkness, for never did love seem more precious than it did then, when our home was overshadowed by outside troubles—the dear, beautiful love of grandpapa and papa for one another, and their tenderness for me.

I had noticed for weeks (before I knew the reason for it) a growing look of care on papa's face, and yet I was all unprepared for what he told me one March day.

It was not a long story, hardly more than a brief half hour did its recital take.

I wonder why *little* things are so impressed on our memories when the heart is greatly moved; things that we are all unconscious of at the time, but that after

wards, years afterwards, come back as distinctly as though we were only divided from them by a short day! Almost five years have passed since that morning, when papa told me that we must leave the dear home of my childhood; and yet I can see, if I close my eyes, everything just as it looked in the old familiar room—the room where I used to play, when I was a tiny girl, with Fred, and Jack too.

I can even now feel the warm sunlight that fell aslant the floor that morning. I can breathe the odor of the roses and violets, that stole in through the half-open door of the conservatory; I can see the unfinished bit of embroidery that dropped from my little work-basket, as I hastily rose, when papa called, "Annie, come to me, I want to talk with you."

Recalling my life, sometimes it seems to me as though the hours most sacred and most dear, were framed in thus by apparent trifles. Just a look, how it stays with one! Just the tones of a voice, a word, how it

will linger! Perhaps it may be to keep us lowly in heart, that such little things make so deep an impression; for, I think, it does humble one to feel they keep the seeming trifles, while sometimes the great events almost slip away. I was talking to grandpapa about this—the significance and importance of trifles—and he reminded me that it was the same in all life, that little things ever hold the germ of the great. The first tiny rain-drop, it holds the hint of the shower. The way-side grass-blade, it points to the meadows on a thousand hills. The falling of a sparrow, it tells us of the Heavenly Father's care. The opening lily-cup, it whispers, too, of that same providing love. Grandpapa said, when he thought of apparently "little things," he always strove to place beside them in his memory that comprehensive saying of Melancthon: "The humble ones are the giants of the battle."

But to return to papa. I remember just how his voice trembled, as he said,

"Annie, my child, we must leave this pleasant home. Can you do it bravely, cheerfully, for your grandfather's sake and mine?"

I did not understand at first what papa meant.

"Leave home?" I asked. "Why, grandpapa never leaves home; and now that Aunt Mary has gone, how could I go away from him?"

"Your grandfather will go too, Annie," papa replied, and his voice was so troubled, I could not ask him then what it all meant; so I just stole my hand into his, and nestled my head down on his shoulder, whispering, by-and-by,

"If we are all together—why—we will not mind it so much."

And as I spoke I felt I was a child, speaking of that I knew not. After a little while papa was calm again, and then he told me business, which he could not explain to me, as it was connected with the misdoing of another, had involved, not only his, but

grandpapa's property, making it necessary for him, papa, to begin life, in a money-making way, over again.

"Unless we sacrifice others, Annie, and we cannot do that without losing, child, something far more precious than money."

And I knew papa meant, though he did not utter the word, *uprightness*.

"I do not mind it for myself," he said, presently, "but for my father and for you, my child, whom I would fain shelter from all care and perplexity. My poor child, whose life was so early clouded, oh, why must this added trouble come!"

Almost like a groan sounded papa's voice, as he let go my hand and rose from his chair, and began to pace up and down the long room. I was timid for a minute about approaching him,—I had never seen papa thus moved before,—but only for a minute, and then, as I clasped his arm, he took my hand into his own, almost smiling, as I whispered again,

"Dear, dear papa, if we are all together, we will be happy."

His only reply was (the words I love best to hear papa say), "You are like your mother, Annie," and as he said that, the hard care-worn look seemed to pass from his face, seemed changed in a second of time into a tender, peaceful look—the look that always makes me feel, when papa's thought is of my mother; Christ so fills his heart with a realization of her happiness, that papa's longing for her is blended in with such unselfish gladness that she is safe, safe Home, where no trouble or care can come, that his heart is full of thanksgiving—thanksgiving for that which is the greatest grief of his life. How strange, wondrously strange it is, that this can be so, and yet it is, and in the knowing it we learn the secret, I think, of the grace and comfort promised for every time of need!

Though I strove to speak cheerfully in reply to papa, I could not keep back the pain it gave me, the thought of grandpapa's

going from the home in which he had passed so many years—the home where he had known so many joys, so many sorrows!

I had but little time for these thoughts, papa so soon began to tell me of the future. He told me, too, just enough of why the trouble had come, to prevent my asking grandpapa anything about it; for while papa told me the few particulars, his eyes were fixed with a look of such pain, and yet of tenderness, on the pictured face of the fair-haired boy, his brother, whose name was so seldom mentioned, and whom I knew must be now almost an old man. But I do not want to linger over all this; enough, that when I went up to my room, I knew that before many weeks ended the place that seemed so all-home to me, would be called home by strangers.

The days which followed seem to me even now like a dream, they were so full of unwonted excitement. Long mornings papa and I spent in going from street to street,

seeking some small house suitable for our changed position.

It was on a Monday we began our house-hunting, and the following week, Saturday, found us still unsuccessful in our search.

"There is but one number left on my list," said papa, as we turned away from a dingy red brick house; "are you too tired to go to it, child?"

"Oh, no; let us go," I said, striving to keep the weariness from my voice, for I was weary, weary and heart-sick; yet, though I strove to hide it, I felt papa knew, though he did not appear to notice it, except by taking my hand and drawing it through his arm, as he said,

"Lean hard, my child, lean hard!"

After all, though I talked with grand-papa about trifling events, I wonder whether anything can really be called a trifle? Those words of papa's, that seemed nothing more than the tenderness of a parent for a tired child, came to me all glowing with light and comfort; in a moment they had

carried my thoughts away from the dusty street; away from the crowded city; away from all the trouble that oppressed us, and I felt as though I were again among the mountains with Jack, sitting in the cool, shady nook, where the rugged rock-sides were green with the clinging little mosses—mosses that always seem singing out the verse:

"Fringeless or fringed, and fringed again,
No single leaflet formed in vain;
What wealth of heavenly wisdom lies
Within one moss-cup's mysteries!
And few may know what silvery net
Down in its mimic depths is set,
To catch the rarest dews that fall
Upon the dry and barren wall.
Voices from the silent sod,
Speaking of the perfect God."

Hearkening, too, to the water rippling over the brook's pebbly bed; seeing the sunshine steal, in merry play, through the massive boughs of the forest trees; and, louder than the noise and roar of the city, I seemed to hear Jack's voice, as he told me the simple,

well-known tale, of the Hindoo woman, whose heart was tender, because she had learned the gospel-story, and who, seeing her missionary teacher weary and faint, needing support, reached out her strong arm, saying, "Lean on me, lean hard!" (Just the words papa said to me.) I almost held my breath, so close Jack seemed, as softly I repeated to myself the lines he copied for me, the day after he told me that little story:

"Child of my love, *lean hard*,
 And let me feel the pressure of thy care ;
 I know thy burden, child, I shaped it,
 Poised it in mine own hand, made no proportion
 In its weight to thy *unaided* strength ;
 For ever as I laid it on, I said,
 'I shall be near,' and when she leans on Me
 This burden shall be mine, not hers ;
 So shall I keep my child within the circling arms
 Of mine own love. Then lay it down, nor fear
 To impose it on a shoulder which upholds
 The government of worlds. Yet *closer* come,
 Thou art not near enough ; I would embrace thy care,
 So I might feel my child reposing on my heart.
 Thou lovest me ? I know it. Doubt not, then,
 But loving Me, LEAN HARD."

And surely, when I remember all the strength those lines gave me during many a following week, I can but feel papa's words, that brought them to my memory again, were not trifling words, though they did seem so. I can but receive encouragement, too, not to overlook the uttering of the least word, for "even weak efforts are sometimes successful, like the clay for the blind man's eyes."

IX.

THIS is the street," papa said, presently, and not far did we go before we came to the house,—a house all unlike our dear home,—as unlike, as the narrow street was to the broad avenue. But it had advantages, it was new, and within our means,—silently we went through it, then papa asked,

"Will it do, Annie?"—and, not waiting for me to reply, he straightway began to plan how we would make it comfortable, saying, "The large front room, that will do for our one parlor and sitting-room, Annie, and the little room off, will serve for a quiet place when your grandpapa wishes to be alone;" opening another door, he added, "This is the dining-room," and so papa con-

tinued to plan, as we went again all through the house.

It touched my heart so, this seeing papa strive to take an interest in it all, and make it easy for me,—and his cheerfulness did make it easy, for when we left the house half an hour later, it no longer seemed dismal,—we had found so many pleasant things about it,—a sunny window, with a broad sill for my pet plants, a tiny garden, too. Then the street was so quiet, and I caught a glimpse of one of the neighbors, such a kindly-faced old lady, whose gown of soft silvery gray and snowy high-crowned cap, told us she was one of the gentle sisterhood, whose "Thee" and "Thou" always sound so sweet to my ears,—and, in the window of the opposite house, there were flowers blooming, behind which a smiling child's face peeped out at us,—"I am sure we will like it," I said to papa, as I called his attention to these things, and then I left him, to run once more from "garret to cellar," that I might remember all about it to tell grandpapa.

Was it just because we were determined to find pleasant things, that they seemed so plentiful that morning? Perhaps it was,—any way it is a pleasant home now, the dearest little home in all New York, I think, though Fred's wife, May, will shake her head and say,

"How can you be contented in this odd corner of the city?"—and some of those who were wont to call me friend bow coldly when we chance to meet on Broadway or one of the avenues, expressing (if they linger to speak) with formal politeness, the regret that we live so far from their circle and neighborhood now, that calling often is quite impossible. So far!—yes, it is far, and growing farther every day, I think, for so much work has come to me since we moved into this little home, so many new thoughts, I feel almost as though I were indeed a stranger to many I used to call friends.

"Call friends," that is just it; we mistake so often, and call so many by that name

who are only acquaintances. My dear little friend, Meta Stanhope, came to see me the other day, all in a perplexity about this. I am very fond of Meta; she is just as old as I was that gladdest year of my life, and she is so natural and easily understood by me; I do not know exactly how to explain it, but now and then I think we do meet some one who seems to us in a mysterious way like ourselves, and yet we know they are very unlike too; it is so with Meta, every circumstance of her life and surroundings are totally different from mine now; then, too, she is as gay as a butterfly, merry as a song-bird, with such sweet, winsome, half-playful, half-earnest ways, one minute smiling and the next thoughtful, but she always makes one feel "the earnest" is the real, true, best part of herself. This winter Meta is in the full vortex of city life, and I often wonder how she can find time to run away from her gay companions for quiet chats with me. When I asked her, she looked up with such a sunny, bright smile, as she replied,

"Why,—oh! Miss Annie, because—because, I love you."

It was the day she said this that we had the talk about friends.

"Please tell me," she asked, "what does it really mean—that word *friend*? What is a real friend?"—and then, spite the longing look in the girl's face, she laughed merrily as she added, "I know it is absurd to ask you so simple a question, but please give me a reply," and all in a minute she had drawn the low stool from its place in the window, nestling down on it close to my side, looking up with her brown, eager, questioning eyes, as again she asked in a musing tone, "Tell me, what is a friend?"

I was silent for long after her question,—it came over me so, the sacred fullness of the word, as God had interpreted it to me through the love of Jack,—and—through the deeper, dearer love of Him who said, "Ye are my friends,—henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." Ah! yes, it goes far beyond the meaning we are wont to

give, as lightly we utter the brief word; far beyond, for does it not hold the essence of a love that is endless, a love which "alters not when it alteration finds," and,—can we ever be *really* divided from a true friend? Can coldness and estrangement really separate us when once we have truly loved well enough to *honestly* say "You are my friend?" May we not believe, always, though perchance it be hidden in some heart-corner, the love must still abide, ready to be illumined again, when we reach that happy Home where no misunderstandings can creep in between hearts? The dear, glad Home, where we shall "know and be known," with no half knowlege.—But I cannot write all it means to me, the word friend, just as I could not speak it out even to the fair young girl waiting for my reply, so I repeated to her, for my answer, old Jeremy Taylor's definition: "By friendship I suppose you mean the greatest love, and the greatest usefulness, and the most open communication, and the sincerest truth, and the

heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds of which brave men and women are capable." Almost before I had ended, Meta sprang up in her impulsive way, exclaiming: "Oh! please do not tell me any more," and yet I know the child will treasure every word of the grand definition. But I have made a wide digression from the morning, when papa and I returned from our house-hunting, successful at last,—such a wide digression, I must hasten to bridge it over.

X.

GRANDFAPA was watching for our coming, and—dear grandpapa, though it must have been so hard for him—listened to my talk of the new home with as much interest as though I were telling of some anticipated pleasure. I never can recall that time without seeming to see his countenance framed in the same descriptive words some one gives of the poet, "whose features were said to be like a beautiful alabaster vase, seen to perfection only when lighted up from within," for all those weeks there was such a glow of spiritual calm beaming from grandpapa's look, no spoken word did it require to tell that Christ was with him.

Only a month later, I stood in the narrow hall of the house, then so strange, now so

familiar, watching the unloading of the last articles of furniture.

It was Saturday morning, and toward afternoon grandpapa was to come to the new home. Two of our old servants were to remain with us, a faithful Scotch woman and her niece, so that the dear old gentleman should not have strange faces about him. We had retained only the simplest of the furniture; the rest had been sold, which was better; for what was suitable for the avenue mansion would have been quite out of place in the small house of the side street. I begged papa to let my piano go, and then (I am almost ashamed to write it down even in this little book) I learned how much easier it is to propose, and even urge, the acceptance of a personal sacrifice than to bravely submit after the sacrifice is accepted; for, when I really knew it was to be sold, I had no courage to touch the notes again, I felt as though if I did they would sound out in chords of pain and parting,—and as soon as papa left the room, after say-

ing, "Well, dear, it is better if you really can be content without it," I laid my head down on the shining rosewood case, and wept as though it were some dear friend from whom I was to be separated. And, was it not a friend?—my piano,—that had given me comfort and pleasure in many an hour vacant of other companionship than that which its music-full keys gave forth in response to my lightest touch. But, after all, it is the harp strains that grandpapa and papa enjoy most, and that I was to keep; and, remembering it, my tears gave place to a feeling of satisfaction over the thought of how much less space the harp would take in the room of our new home that was to serve for reception, library, music and living room—all in one.

Such a pleasant room it looked, spite the comparatively low ceiling and plain whitened walls, as I peeped in for a last gaze, to be quite sure that all was in order before going for grandpapa.

We had hung the warm crimson curtains

from the old library at the windows and across a little alcove at the end of the room, from which they were looped back in rich, graceful folds. On one side of the alcove stood my harp and music-stand, on the other a carved easel Fred had given me on my last birthday; on it I had placed a small unframed painting of which grandpapa was very fond—a picture of a sunset with a background of high hills, above which over-arched the deep restful blue of an evening sky, broken here and there by fleecy clouds—clouds transparent as mist veils, clouds tenderly tinted with violet and primrose hues caught from the sun just gone behind the hills, against which forest trees, shady mysterious masses of trees, stood out—the shady places lit up now and then with brilliant crimson frost-dyed maples, or low-growing sumac, and dogwood whose plumey branches were gay as the wings of tropical birds. But the part of the picture which said the most, in that silent yet voiceful way, in which pictures whisper their

stories, was the near foreground,—a brook let, on the bank-sides of which tall grasses, willows and alders grew, while in the still waters of the stream quiet shadows were caught and held—peaceful, comprehensible shadows (not like the weird reflections that stretch their lengthened shade in sober dress of grey across road-side and meadow), shadows of the far-away hills, the sky and sunset clouds, of the willows, alders and tall grasses;—lesson-full shadows, just as I think reflections held in still-water places always are, “because water is so bright, so pure, so transparent, so fit an emblem of that spiritual element in which our souls should bathe and be strengthened, from which they should drink and be satisfied.” It is a perpetual baptism of refreshment to the mind and senses.” I never can look down into the infinite depth, where the reflections are mirrored, without seeming to catch a fuller truer revelation of the meaning of the verse: “But, we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the

Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even* as by the spirit of the Lord."

But I must not tarry to describe every corner of our cheerful room, and yet I enjoy recalling just how everything looked that first day of our coming here, though it is all much the same now — papa's easy-chair stands just where it did then, with grandpapa's opposite, his little foot-stool before it, and by its side the table on which I always place the books he reads oftenest—volumes penned by men of lofty and cultivated thought,—while from the book-case that fills up almost one side of the room, shining letters reveal the names of Lord Bacon, Milton and Shakespeare, Bishop Butler and Jeremy Taylor, with many another royal title in the kingdom of literature.

Over the mantel we hung the picture of my grandmother, a stately lady of the olden time, and just beneath it we stood the old clock, that had rung in and rung out hours for papa, ever since he was a child.

The porcelains of Aunt Mary and Mr. Grafton we found places for too, and for that other picture of the merry-faced boy, the portrait that grandpapa always kept near him, and yet which he never looked toward without a sorrowful look. Beside these pictures, there was room for several engravings, dear to grandpapa and papa from association; I care for them too, though engravings always seem cold to me, I so love the warmth of color. There were flowers, too, in our window that March day, just as there are now—blooming plants—for papa said I might take a few from the home conservatory, so I chose a rose bush, all covered with buds; a shining broad-leaved calla, crowned with one stately white flower, and an azalia, all aglow with its clusters of pink blossoms,—a geranium too, one of those multiplying geraniums, that open "the concealed treasure of their buds" the more flowers one breaks from the parent stem—just like some lives, that seem richer and fuller of blossoms, heart-blossoms, deeds

of gentle charity and love—the more they give. I chose, too, several lowly-growing plants, violets, primroses and yellow and purple-eyed crocuses, also a rustic basket, from which hung long tendrils of dark green-leaved ivy and drooping clusters of light green smilax, clusters that looked like merry smiles as they intertwined with the sober ivy leaves. When all was arranged, our window-place looked like a tiny garden patch, it was so gay in color and green.

I cannot write of the leaving our old home; I can only tell, that when evening came, we gathered all together, papa, grandpapa and I, close about the fire in the new home,—and it was a bright, clear, burning fire. And grandpapa,—dear old grandpapa, to whom the change was so much more than it could be even to papa,—was yet the most cheerful of us three.

So it ended, the day we had dreaded, and not such a hard day had it been after all, “For we have learned to-day, have we not, my child,” asked grandpapa, as he

kissed me good - night, “the support of the strength, sufficient?” I only whispered in reply, the Bible verse that had been ringing in my heart all day long, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.” But now I will take no more far-backward looks, as I write in this little book, but begin to-morrow to tell of a night only two brief months by-gone.

XI.

I OFTEN wonder if every one finds as much comfort in their windows as I do in mine; I have not a far-reaching outlook from it, and yet I am wont to call the glimpses it gives me of life, my story-books,—my teachers,—for sometimes I think these glimpses are as full to me of helpful lessons as those I read from printed page. Fred laughs at this.

“Why, Annie,” he said, when I told it to him, “if we have books, we have windows, opening toward all lands, look-out places over all the broad world.” Before his words my window-view seemed to shrink into insignificance, for all it shows me, are the passers on the other side of the street, and just round the corner; no, not all, for up beyond the monotonous brick walls,

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I have by day the blue sky, and at night the stars, with sometimes a peep at the moon. But there was a day, two months ago, when there was no blue sky for me to see, for from early dawn, snow and sleet pattered against my window-pane. I can hardly realize, this sweet May morning, how wildly the March wind blew that storm-full day,—that day that was so laden with window-lessons for me,—lessons that began during the night hours.

The chapter that I read in the evening-time, was the one in Ezekiel, where it tells of the Lord our Shepherd. It never seemed so beautiful to me before. I could not help reading it aloud, just because I longed to catch the clear, full strain of spiritual harmony, that sings through it, as a water course creeps through green meadows.

“For thus saith the Lord, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out, as a shepherd seeketh out his flock; in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep,

and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered, in the cloudy and dark day."

I will take the verses, I thought, for a promise, in which to frame my window-glimpses to-morrow,—the glimpses of the men and women, who pass to and fro, busy with life-duties. So many of them I knew were walking in the shadow of a cloudy, dark day,—and then I read the beautiful, tender words: "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they be in a good fold: I will seek that which is lost, and will bind up that which was broken."

How little I thought then, that before another night-fall, the truth of those words would be being verified in our own home. A few minutes later, I put out my light,—and then, scarce two hours after, I woke to find, though it was midnight, "my window" had a life-glimpse all ready to frame for me,—a glimpse, warm and pulsing with life, and

full of hints, that reveal the inward by the outward, as all true life-glimpses do.

The clock in the neighboring church-tower was just ringing out the last notes of the twelve sharp strokes, that heralded yesterday had met to-day. What a meeting-place it is, the belfry of a church! One hour echoing to the sound of a marriage chime; the next, to the tolling of a funeral knell! Would that it were the only place where joy and sorrow touch so closely; but, alas! even looking from my window, I know that it is not, for they seem to go hand in hand, up and down all life's roadways, those two, gladness and grief. But my first glimpse, it came just after I heard the voices of a youthful band of serenaders, making "music in the night" for a blue-eyed, laughing girl, who lived near. I pushed aside my curtains, and looked down on the gay company. I could see them quite distinctly, for the moonlight was bright then, though so soon storm-clouds were to shut away its beams; indeed, they

were already beginning to dance before it—the mysterious, white-winged clouds, that seemed playing, with never a fear, a merry game of bo-peep with the stately moon and twinkling stars.

It was not long before the little group of singers passed out of sight into the shadow of the house beyond, and then, once again, as they went on their way to sing before other windows, they stood for a moment, clearly defined in the silvery moonlight. But it was not the serenaders that made my picture, but the stooping figure of a man who was leaning for support against a low wall, that enclosed a vacant lot at the corner, while he eagerly listened to the music, bending forward as though he would fain not lose one strain.

Long I watched him, that motionless man, out in the night. Had he a home? Were there eyes looking, hearts longing, for his coming? This was what I thought,—and it made my first window-story a life-history,—for when I had let the curtain drop,

and lay with closed eyes and wide-awake soul thinking it over, the verse about the Shepherd came to my mind, and I wondered,—Did the wayfaring man, as he hearkened to the music, catch notes that touched some memory-spot, that murmured to him of his childhood, of his mother's voice singing the cradle-hymn, and was it thus the Shepherd was leading him toward "good pasture on the high mountains of Israel;" for so often grandpapa had said to me, "Child, remember God uses sometimes very little things to turn wandering feet into the narrow way of peace." Ah! how little I thought then, *who* that wayfaring man was; how little I knew of all he was to bring into our home of anxiety, and yet of comfort.

The one stroke of the clock, sounding sharp and cold in its solitariness, bade me lie awake no longer, and soon I slept.

When I awoke it was morning; gray dawn in place of moonlight, wild wind in place of singing; so the day stole on storm-

encompassed, and my window-view it was very limited, so thick was the air with the falling snow; but, through the shadowy veil, I could catch outlines of the few passers at that early hour,—the toilers who could not linger from work, because of storms. It was a motley company, made up of strong men, and old men bent with life's burden, and of little fellows, so small, in the homes of the rich, I think they would have been called still,—“our little children,”—but,—the poor and the rich, they count years so differently!

There were women, too, women with thin and worn shawls, women whose eyes were beginning to grow dim, whose faces were wrinkled by time,—and girls,—young girls, no older than she for whom the music had sounded in the night-time.

Later in the day came other passers—portly men in warm overcoats, and children snugly wrapt in soft furs and mufflers—children who clapped their hands in glee, merry spite the storm. Ah! if I could have fol-

lowed those different passers, what histories I could have read,—histories of utter heart-loneliness, heart-hunger, in the midst of care-free crowds, stories of misery and sin, and stories of virtue and gladness; and so they go on, ever changing as the hours of time, these life-dramas, that are being lived in the broad thoroughfares of city streets,—“dramas, each enclosed in its own mystery, carrying its own particular world, a sphere apart, like a special atmosphere around it. Tragedy even brushes shoulders with us, stalking by to death or crime, and we know it not,—and thus the stream goes on. Will it flow forever? or is it possible that each individual figure will stop somewhere, and drop, and die, and be seen no more, till all are exhausted,—and yet the streets continue as full, and the stream of passers as constant?” I don't think we could ever let ourselves *really* realize, even for a little while, all the earnest meaning of this passing life, that we meet on the city streets, were it not for that promise, “Behold I will both search

my sheep, and find them out, saith the Lord."

But grandpapa is calling, and I must put away pen and paper for to-day.

XII.

ALMOST as though he had some instinct that the coming hours would require special love and charity in my heart, special tenderness for the misdoings of another, seemed grandpapa's after-breakfast talk with me, the morning following the time of which I wrote yesterday.

"Come, look at the snow-fall, Annie," he called, and together we stood by the window overlooking our tiny garden-plot.

"See," said grandpapa, "how the pure white mantle is spread over your brown and barren flower-beds; how it hides the dead and withered grass of the little border too, seeming like a cloak of sweet charity, child, that spreads the gentleness that 'thinketh no evil, is not easily provoked, that hopeth all things, endureth all things,' around our

faults and wanderings." And grandpapa laid his hand, as though in blessing, on my head (such touches always seem heavenly to me), while in a low voice he added:

"Be, in your life, my child, like the snow-fall, hiding the rough and unsightly, gently covering up dark places,—not only covering them up, but forgetting them, and striving to make others forget them, too."

"How can I do it, grandpapa?" I whispered.

"Let your thoughts be 'white-robed thoughts,' Annie," he replied, "and you will know,—and your 'life will be pure as a snow-field, where footsteps leave a mark, but not a stain.'"

I never had thought before of connecting the snow with the charity chapter, and it is full of even tenderer meanings, for does it not teach of the Heavenly Father's forgiving love, that broods, with out-spread wings of concealment, over our wrong-doings, hiding them all out of sight, for Christ's sake, just as the snow conceals the brown earth, with-

ered flowers, and fallen leaves. Since grandpapa's words, I cannot but wonder why I have not felt its tender meaning before. Just so, I suppose, everything in God's world is all aglow with lessons of truth, if only our eyes were wide enough open to read the truths,—no, not so much our eyes as our hearts. Ever since I was a wee girl I have enjoyed watching a snow storm—the tiny diamond and star-shaped flakes have such a mystery about them, falling, as they do,

"Out of the bosom of the air,
Out of the cloud folds of her garments shaken,"

breathing, as they do,

"The poem of the air,
Slowly in silent syllables recorded."

Then it, the falling snow, makes me feel so comfortable,—they nestle so, the feathery crystals of the clouds, into out-of-the-way nooks, finding hiding-places in evergreen boughs, branches of leafless trees, in window-sills, and sheltered corners, always

seeming as though they were looking for homes. And,—perhaps they are,—for what does home mean, but a resting-place, a safe shelter! Life's resting-places!—yes, they are our homes, and from their sweet sense of security and repose the word *Home* holds for us the fullness of earthly content, and the deeper, more satisfying fullness of the promised Home, the “house not made with hands.”

Hardly had grandpapa ended speaking to me of the pure snow's lesson of charity, before twice, as though pulled by some trembling or impatient hand, the front door-bell rang.

“It is too stormy a morning to keep any one waiting,” I said, and without giving Jane time to come upstairs I ran to the door. I never shall forget that moment; in an instant I recognized the man standing in the open door-way, as the very one whose weary, stooping figure, leaning against the opposite wall, had attracted my attention when I looked out to see the serenaders;

and in an instant, in a dim, undefined way, I recognized something else too; something that made me shiver and tremble; for from that haggard and wan face looked forth eyes that were strangely familiar to me,—and I knew it was the same look that I had grown to know from gazing on the pictured face of the boy, toward which grandpapa never glanced without a sigh.

It was a tremulous voice that asked, in beseeching tones,

“Does Mr. Gray—the old gentleman—live here? Is he well?—will you ask him, will he see a—stranger?” And the man's voice halted at that word, and yet,—he twice repeated it,—“a—stranger.”

There was no need for me to reply,—no need for me to say, “Come in,”—for, spite the long years of wandering, spite all the changes wrought by time and—sin—on that countenance, there was an ear that heard that trembling voice, to whom that weary, sin and trouble tossed man could never be a stranger,—and,—with only the

words, "My boy,"—with only the answer, "My father," the traveled, stained, wayfaring, wandering man was folded to his father's heart,—folded as tenderly, as lovingly, as if he had been a child,—and—he was a child,—for, thank God, we are always children to our fathers and mothers.

And there they stood silent—silent for many minutes,—the old man, whose locks were white as the falling snow,—whose steps were tottering as the steps of a tottering child,—and that other man, whose hair was silvered, too—but not from age; whose step was halting, too—but not from years. And then—it was lived over in our home, that tenderest of all the parables the God-man left us, the divinely human parable so beautifully called "a gospel within the gospel."

Presently grandpapa led him into the warm room—led him to his own chair, and with his tender hand, the hand that had such a little while before rested on my head in blessing, he unfastened the shabby, worn

overcoat, and gently laid aside the weather-stained hat, and he stooped and kissed the forehead, that for so many a year had been unpressed by father or mother lips—and then I turned away and left them, father and child, alone with God.

Child! this always remaining children to the heart of human fatherhood, it explains so wondrously the great heart of Perfect Fatherhood, and it contains such a balm and rest for the aged. It comforted me so, that hour, when I left them alone, the thinking that while dear old grandpapa's heart was being sorely, bitterly tried by the story of his son's wandering,—while it was being filled with gratitude, too, that the wanderer had returned,—he, grandpapa, could reach out and up a hand as clinging and confiding in its child-like trust in the Heavenly Father, a hand as sure of a sympathizing hand-clasp in return, as that middle-aged man, who was still a child to grandpapa, was sure of a tender, responsive grasp from his earthly father's hand.

A full hour had gone by before grandpapa called me—an hour in which I had been very busy; for, with dear grandpapa's sweet charity-lesson shining like a beacon in my heart, with the remembrance of the Heavenly Father's promise that I had read the night-fall before, I could not but yearn to do something toward a welcome for the returned wanderer.

Our servants, good faithful old Martha and her steady niece Jane, had been so long with us, that, without a word of inquiry or appearance of curiosity, they entered straightway into the preparations for my "uncle," whom, I told them, had returned home after a long, long absence—and "I think he is very ill," I said, by way of explanation, as I bade Jane kindle a fire in the guest chamber. I wanted the room to look cheery and bright, and I knew all the brightness must come from inside, for with the increasing day the storm had grown more wild and severe.

Grandpapa used the very same words

that I had done in speaking to the servants, saying, as I re-entered the room,

"Annie, this is your uncle, returned home after a long, long absence."

There was something almost pleading in grandpapa's look,—dear, dear grandpapa! It seemed as though, just in the hour in which I had left him, his hair had grown more snowy white, his figure more bowed with age, as though some great, rough blow had fallen upon him, crushing out, all in a moment, the elasticity from his frame and heart; and it had fallen, that heaviest blow ever the heart of a parent can know; and yet, as sometimes when the winter wind sighs and moans amid the leafless trees, we catch a strain mingled with it, gentle as the breath of summer breeze—so there shone from grandpapa's face, and sounded from his voice, an echo of great peace, blended in with much pain.

My uncle (just at first it was so hard for me to utter the words) was still sitting in grandpapa's easy chair, which he had pushed

round in front of the little table, on which he leaned his arms, hiding his face in his hands. He took no apparent notice of my approach, no apparent notice of my words, but I felt a tremble pass through his frame, as I laid my hand gently on his shoulder, saying:

"I am so glad you have come home, dear uncle,"—and seeing, from his very position, the utter weakness and weariness that oppressed him, I hastened away, eager to bring the warm tea and nourishing food I had told Martha to have ready; and then he ate and drank, almost like a famished man; and yet no word he spoke, only, as his glance fell on the tray, with its spotless damask cloth, and on the china, which I knew was the very same used when he was a boy, a sigh, bitter and long-drawn as a groan sounded in the room.

When the meal was finished, together he and grandpapa went upstairs, and again I left them alone.

XIII.

IT seemed to me as though that morning never would end; I could hardly believe when the lunch-bell rang, that it was only a little past noon-time, and that I must wait all the long hours till six o'clock, before papa would return from his office. I could not help, spite my longing for it, dreading the home-coming for papa—could not help wondering, whether ever again he would go to his daily business, leaving grandpapa and me, with the same care-free heart, now that once during his absence, such an unlooked for event had come to us. But, after all, I did not have to wait till night-fall for papa's return, for grandpapa's greeting words to me, as I entered the dining-room, were:

"Annie, your uncle is very ill, and I need

your father. Do you think you could direct Jane to his office?"

"Oh, dear grandpapa!" I exclaimed, "please let me go. I will bundle up, and never mind the storm at all;"—and seeing the doubtful look on grandpapa's face, as a gust of wind drove the snow in a blinding flurry against the window-pane, I hastily continued:

"I need only walk two blocks,"—and then I met the remonstrating words, I saw his lips were about to utter, with a kiss—and dear grandpapa was so broken that hour, so wanting papa, that he consented to my going without more hesitation, though first he made me eat my lunch, and then he saw himself, that I was all muffled up in a warm cloak and veil, before I ventured out into the storm. Not till I turned the corner did I realize its severity, but every one was so kind to me that day, I could hardly mind wind or driving snow. I almost think now, recalling it, that I must have shown by my manner, that I was on some errand

of deep interest to me. Even the pale-faced lad, busy with snow-shovel and broom, at the street-crossing, ceased his work, to run half a block to stop a car for me, and his thanks were as hearty for the few pence I gave him, as oftentimes they had been for twice the amount. Then the rough men, who were jostling one another on the narrow platform of the car, made way for me to enter, and when I looked at the crowded seats, half-a-dozen, I think, strove to make a place for me; but I could not take their seats from them, for they were all tired, hard-working people who filled the car that stormy day, to whom a ride, even in a close, crowded public conveyance, was a luxury. As I shook my head, saying, "Thank you; I can stand," they smiled kindly smiles, while one of the rudest and poorest looking of them, too, exclaimed, in a broad Irish tone:

"Sure, and there's room for the like of ye, my lady," and she drew closer to her next neighbor, leaving a little wedge-like

place for me by her side,—and I could not refuse the proffered kindness.

It was more like an open story-book than even my window-views, that car full of people—every person an open page, and, though my heart was full of home thoughts, mixed with plans as to how I could break the news to papa, I could not help the nooks and the crannies of my mind being filled with wonderings too, as to my companions,—wonderings that, in one sense, did not interfere with my other thoughts, more than the throwing of a pebble into water interferes with the steady incoming wave, whose surface it only serves to ripple.

At last we reached Park Place, and then only a minute's walk, and I was with papa, whose startled look, on seeing me, drove to flight all my plans for gently telling him, and without one word of explanation as to why I was there, eagerly I said :

“Grandpapa is quite well, papa ; nothing is the matter, only—my uncle is come home—and I came to tell you.”

And, weary as a tired child, I laid my head back on the chair papa mechanically pushed in front of the fire for me, and sat quite still, while he shook the clinging snow from my cloak. I felt as though I could not utter a word. Papa looked so bewildered, my eyes seemed riveted on his countenance, where so many different emotions were struggling—sternness with tenderness, gladness with sorrow,—love of the right, with pity for the wrong,—and then, as one sees when watching a sunrise among the mountains, the light first kindles on the highest peaks, then slowly, but surely, descend “the stairway of the hills,” till the lowlands are all aglow with the dawn of day, so in papa's face, as I knew it did in his heart, the tenderness and love gained the victory, casting out of sight the shadows of severity, and thoughts of the wanderer's misdoings !

Papa did not ask any questions, though he listened with intense earnestness, when presently I told him of the by-gone night, when I had watched the lonely man out in

the dark, and of the Bible promise I had linked with his solitary figure, the promise of our God "to search and seek out His sheep;" and then I repeated my talk with grandpapa, the talk interrupted by the sharp ringing of the door-bell, adding, almost in a whisper—there was such a look of awe on papa's face as I told it,—the history of the meeting of father and son, in the open door-way;—the open door-way of the human father's home, that stands ever ajar for wanderers, if they will but seek it. Ah! what type more beautiful of that spiritual Door, Christ, through whom we gain admittance, even though our "sins be as scarlet," into the Heavenly Father's home.

While I talked, papa was busy laying away his papers. Just as I finished, he stooped and locked his desk, and, on the closed lid, I saw fall, though he brushed it hastily away, a tear.

Then together we went out into the storm, and just because dear papa was with me, the home-going seemed almost nothing

while the coming had seemed so much.—I left papa alone in the library to meet grandpapa, saying:

"I will tell him you are home," and I did not come down-stairs again till the dinner-bell rang; then I found grandpapa and papa standing before the fire talking earnestly. I think they were glad to have me join them, for papa held out his hand, and drew me close to him.

How strange it is, that sometimes a slight touch will suddenly wake up memories of the past! Just the way papa drew me to him, as though it were not only an act of loving tenderness, but as though I were a comfort and help to him, brought over me so vividly the morning when, standing close by Jack's side, with his arm around me, I had felt, that I was to him, not only some one to love, and be loved by, but some one to comfort and help him, too; and—was it wrong?—I seemed to feel from that memory, a new courage stealing into my heart, new strength, to meet the strange, unlooked-for

duties that were gathering around me Papa did not speak after I entered, except to say, as he stooped and kissed me, "I will go and stay with Rufus, father, while you and Annie dine."

Then grandpapa and I went in to the dining-room, and after an almost untasted meal, grandpapa said:

"Come into the library a few minutes, dear," and, sitting on a low stool, with my head resting on his knee, sitting in the dark, except for the faint glow of fire-light, he told me the pitiful tale of my uncle's wanderings,—at least he told me all that I needed to know.

Such a pitiful tale! beginning with the history of a bright, innocent childhood, followed by a youth-time, brilliant in hopes, but only in hopes; and then came an after-time, the years of early manhood, which grandpapa only touched by briefest word; and then, when youth and early manhood were marred by vacillating purpose, and yielding principles, came the great tempta-

tion,—the temptation that forgot father and brother, honor and truth,—and "that was the time, Annie," grandpapa said, while his voice trembled (it hurt him so, that noble, true-hearted old man, to tell of his own boy's wandering), "when your father and I, lost, child, the property we had supposed safe."

"And now," grandpapa presently went on to say, "your uncle has come home to me, Annie—come home—a broken down, poverty-stricken, dying man, and he is my own child still—my own child!"

This was all grandpapa told me, and after a minute's silence, he went upstairs to my uncle's room.

XIV.

PAPA came down-stairs only for a few minutes; he scarcely touched the dinner I had bade Jane keep warm for him; he was very silent—almost abstracted, though not unmindful of me, for there was tenderness in his slightest action, while a whole heart-full sounded in his voice.

"Is there nothing I can do, dear papa?" I asked, as he rose from the table, and was hastening to go to grandpapa and my uncle again.

"No, darling, nothing," he replied; "only stay in the library till I come or send for you."

And the door closed after papa, and I was left alone; I had no heart to sew, no heart to read, so I turned the gas down low and, drawing my little foot-stool in front of the fire, I sat down, leaning my head against grandpapa's easy chair, while my mind was

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busy with thoughts, and yet intent on the least sound in the room above, where I could distinctly hear the quick step of faithful Martha, and papa's heavier tread, as they moved about, ministering to the wants of the sufferer. And then I heard the front door open and shut, and grandpapa's voice, as he called to the doctor to come upstairs; and by-and-by I heard the door shut again, and I knew the doctor had gone. So long I sat there, that the fire burnt low, its light grew dim, and all the while, though the mystery and the dread that comes with the near approach of the death-angel was about me, yet, as one hears, now and then, blended in with the full solemn swell of organ music, a gentle bird-like note, tender as tenderest symphony, so, echoing in my heart all that long evening-time sounded, whispering of compassion for all who go astray, the verse:

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

And, as an outgrowth of these lines, came to my memory, clothed with greater clearness and beauty than ever before, the types Christ used in the parable of the Prodigal Son—the robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf. The “robe” that the revelation chapter calls the “white raiment,” the robe of righteousness, not the prodigal’s own righteousness, but the righteousness of Him “who forgiveth transgressions,” who “covereth sins,” whose promise is, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”

The “ring,” used in the Old Testament narrative as a mark of such kingly favor, a mark of confidence between sovereign and subject, just as between the forgiving Lord and the forgiven sinner,—there is a bond of trustful confidence—a question and answer bond, the voice saying to the humble penitent: “I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee;” “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in

weakness.” And the response, though often in trembling tones, always it is: “Behold God *is* my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.”

This question and answer music of the Bible language, it sounds too, in the symbol of the “shoes,” that point so vividly toward a new life, a new path, made smooth to the repentant wanderer, now that “his feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;” now that, in answer to his supplicating prayer, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not,” the Promiser replies: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

The “fatted calf,” how tenderly it typifies the hunger that is so much deeper than any material want, but that yet will be satisfied.

My thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Martha.

“I came to tell you, Miss Annie dear,” she said, “that your uncle is more comfortable,

and your father wants you to go to bed—and to sleep too,” she added.

The sound of a voice in the room, where I had been so long silent, for it was past eleven o'clock, almost startled me, and it was in a half whisper I asked :

“Tell me, Martha, just how he really is, and—will it be to-night?”

She knew at once what I meant, and answered, without hesitation :

“No, no, Miss Annie, not to-night, nor for many a night, I'm a-thinking ; for, though he is feeble and far gone, there is strength in him yet.” And Martha went on to tell how the doctor had said that it was the exposure of the early morning, (and I knew of the night before,) when the storm was so violent, that had made my uncle so much worse.

As she talked, as though to throw more of life and warmth into her words, she moved about the room, turned up the gas, and stirred the dead embers of the fire.

Seeing Martha busied thus, caused me to

feel a sudden reaction, from the quiet, the dim light, and the strain of anxiety I had been under, so that almost with a light heart I ran up-stairs ; papa was waiting at my door to give me a good-night kiss, and he, too, repeated Martha's assurance that my uncle was more comfortable.

“So try and sleep, my child,” he said, “for it has been a long, anxious day to you, Annie.”

“May I not go in just for a minute?” I asked, looking toward the half-open door of the invalid's room ; “May I not say good-night to grandpapa?”

Silently papa consented, taking my hand and leading me into the room. Grandpapa was sitting by the sufferer's bedside, holding the thin, wasted hand in his own,—and I thought something of the broken-down, troubled look that was not old age, which I had seen on grandpapa's face at dinner-time, had gone, for he smiled on seeing me, and, holding out his disengaged hand, drew me to him, while in a low voice he said :

"What fuel for the winter-time fire, Annie child, have you found to-day?"

I think my look must have shown that I had not found a bit of fuel in the day, which seemed to me then so all-barren of comfort-yielding memories, for grandpapa added:

"Seek, child, and if you do not seek alone, you will find it."

I only kissed him in reply, and then I stooped, and with the lightest touch left on the pale, wasted hand grandpapa held, nothing but a kiss; yes, there was something else, for I could not help a tear dropping too.

My uncle took no notice of the action, except to sigh, as he had done in the morning when I had welcomed him home—a sigh, so deep-drawn, that it almost seemed laden with some murmured word, and yet "the murmur was just a double groan." Quietly I stole away to my own room, and I did try to sleep as papa told me, but grandpapa's words kept ringing over in my heart, as though calling out for an answer

Were there truths hidden in our sorrows—tender, precious heart-truths, that we could not discover, except as the rude blows of trouble opened them out to us?—Truths, hidden as the heart of the forest oak is hidden, by rough and knotted bark, till some woodman's axe lays open to the sunshine the green, fresh sap-full wood, from which sweet, spicy odors exhale, odors that never would have come forth without the axe-man's blow. But something more than fragrant odor the heart of the oak has to give—great logs of warm, life-giving fire-wood are taken from it; but not till it has lain for many and many a day in the bright sunshine—not till the warm beams have penetrated its every fibre and absorbed its native juice, is it ready for its beautiful mission of back-logs in the home-chimney corner; just as our hearts need something more than the rude blows of trouble—need to be permeated by rays from the sun of Righteousness—need to be so absorbed by that sun, that self is hidden in Christ before we can really

show forth, in our daily lives, the "sweet uses of adversity"—sweet uses that never would have been, except the trouble had come to discover the hidden depth of Christ's love to us, with an illumination that gives light, not to ourselves only, but to all about us.

But what were the comfort truths that contained fuel for my winter fire that grandpapa bade me seek in that day's experience? Ah! there were so many when I began to count them up, though they were almost all lowly-growing heart-blossoms, yet, like many of the key-words of our language, all freighted with power to unlock rich treasure-houses of truths.

First, there was the pure white blossom of forgiveness—grandpapa's forgiveness for his erring child—surely that, in its reality and in its symbolizing, contained something more than a brand for my fire. And then there was papa's tenderness, his readiness to sacrifice and forget self if only he could help his brother,—surely in it I might find a

branch of dry, well-seasoned fire-wood. For the self-sacrifice was no sudden impulsive emotion, for recalling the past years since we left our old home—I knew it had been all the time working in papa's life; and that lesson of self-sacrifice, in it I found a symbol-truth too, "for does not all *self*-sacrifice point us to that Highest of all renunciation acts? for is it not by His self-sacrifice that Jesus meets us?" and "is it not by our self-sacrifices that we meet Him, our Lord Christ?"

But, to return to "my findings," there was kindling, too, in the good-will of the servants—their true delicacy and kindliness in restraining the curiosity which must have been in their minds.

Thinking of all these things, I fell asleep at last, and did not wake till broad daylight, not till the sun shone into my room for during the night, yesterday's storm had ceased yesterday's clouds vanished away.

XV.

SOMETIMES, I think, when one is in trouble, it seems as though the air were full of "carrier pigeons," so speedily the news of grief is wafted to loving friends. It was so the day after my uncle's return; before noon-time, Carrie and Meta Stanhope too, had called; and early in the morning Fred came; and they had all heard of my uncle's return, though, except to Fred, no message had been sent. Our neighbors, also, by an instinct of sympathy, seemed to guess that some shadow rested over our home, for Mrs. Wilson, who lived opposite, had sent to inquire how we all were, even before the doctor had made his early visit. And hardly had the drifted snow been cleared from steps and sidewalk before dear

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old Mrs. Bond (the Quaker lady whose home adjoins ours) came in on a kindly errand; she was so tender and motherly, so considerate in refraining from all questions that savored of curiosity, it was a real comfort to me, the telling her of my uncle's return and serious illness.

"If thou needest help, dear child," she said, as I accompanied her to the door, "thou wilt know where to turn; remember, I will come to thee at night or day."

And then the dear old lady went home to gather for and send the sick one, every blossom from the plants she had so carefully cherished all the winter-time.

I often wonder whether those to whom our Heavenly Father grants this blessed ministry of sending flowers into the darkened rooms of the suffering, fully realize the beautiful mission of their gifts!—a mission which touches so many different chords in the heart of the receiver. Sometimes, recalling the flowers that were sent my uncle those days, I think every blossom came

laden with its own gentle whisper—a whisper that woke up pure thoughts in his soul, as one, perchance, murmured of gratitude; while another won a smile of pleasure, as its sweet odor hinted of sympathy; and yet another, by the mysterious, electrical touch of memory, brought back recollections of by-gone days, long-silent thoughts, helpful and upward-leading to the sufferer, as Sabbath mornings' sunlight on eastern hills. Yes, surely, I do believe that never yet a flower came alone into a sick room; that always it brings with it something more than its own beauty and fragrance, something that points heavenward. There is a little pansy (that lies pressed now between the leaves of my Bible), a heartsease blossom, that my uncle held for hours in his hand the day before he left us, that is more precious to me than legacy of gold or gem—a little pansy, from whose heart-shaped leaves the colors are beginning to fade, and yet,—and yet—

It always makes me glad that it was Car-

rie, Jack's sister, who brought that blossom to my uncle.

But I have wandered from the flowers Mrs. Bond sent; I carried them straightway to my uncle's room, saying:

"See, dear uncle, the sweet flowers that have been sent you—flowers that have bloomed for you, just for *you*, spite the winter frost," and I put them into his outstretched hand, while I turned away to bring a vase; and,—he held them so tenderly, the mute, yet voice-full little things; so tenderly, while a look of gentleness,—a look more like that which shone from the portrait of the boy's countenance,—stole over his face. It was gone in a moment, and restlessly he turned toward the wall, away from the flowers, away from the sunlight, that crept in through the half-closed blinds; and thus he lay for hours, silent, except for an occasional long-drawn sigh.

And now, I must not tarry to describe the days that followed, though every one was made dear to me by some token—though

sometimes it was only a very slight token—of the dawning of a better, purer life for my uncle, who, with every passing day, grew more and more feeble; and yet he was very reserved, almost repellantly so, when dear grandpapa or papa made any effort to speak with him of the change from this life into the next, which we all knew must come to him very soon. But though he repelled any personal conversation, he was hungry and thirsty, like some wanderer from a desert land, to catch every word of the blessed gospel truths, that, without any pre-conceived planning, grandpapa and I fell into the way of talking about, as we sat together in his room through the long mornings or deepening twilights of the waning day. And so it came about, that that time was very full of wood for my heart-fire, ripened, clear, burning wood, for dear grandpapa gave forth so many precious truths, from his own experience, as he revealed and made plain for my uncle, “the beautiful parable of life, the finding out the love of God

by looking at it when it can be seen, by believing in it when it is hidden, and by trusting in it and following it always.”

And so the hours stole on, till the last day came.

XVI.

IT was a Sabbath morning early in April one of those first spring-like days, when even in the city the balmy air seems fragrant with hints of the flowers that are so soon to wake into bloom all the countryside over. So sweet and mild a day, that I left the eastward window in my uncle's room wide open; the window through which, spite the partly closed blinds, the sunshine fell in golden glints of brightness aslant the floor; the window through which no discordant city sound stole that quiet morning to disturb the invalid—only pleasant sounds, as befitted the holy day. The ringing of the church-bells, the faint, echoing strains of an organ in the Chapel near by,—these, and the occasional ripple of children's

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voices and the patter of little feet, as they passed on their way to Sabbath-school, were the only sounds we heard. Carrie came in before going to the school (she kindly taught my class in the Chapel those days when I could not leave my uncle).

"I have only come," she said, "to bring a few violets and heartsease, with a Sabbath morning greeting, for your uncle."

One of those heartsease was the very flower he held nearly all the morning long—held till the flower began to droop.

Carrie was so gentle and full of sympathy when I told her how very feeble my uncle had become during the last few days, and how our physician had the night before told papa that he could linger but a brief time. She begged to stay with me, but I would not consent, for really I did not need her when papa and grandpapa were both with me, and I did not think then the change would come so soon.

So, after lingering a few minutes, she kissed me good-bye, saying: "Do not for-

get, dear, that oftentimes the days that flow through the deepest channels of darkness are the fullest of peace."

Will to-day be full of peace? I wondered, as I closed the door after Carrie, and slowly went upstairs to give my uncle the little flowers.

I think he had learned to love me during the by-gone weeks, for now and then his face would light up with pleasure as I entered the room, and much of his reserve toward me had melted away, though he still said but little—so little, that I was almost startled that morning, when, half as though speaking to me, half as though to himself, he repeated, in a clear, distinct tone, though his voice was wont to be so tremulous, the lines:

"I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore;
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand:
How few! Yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep, while I weep."

"Oh, God, can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
Oh, God, can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem,
But a dream within a dream?"

As he ended he gazed at me with such a beseeching look—I think I can never lose it from my memory—while, in a broken whisper, as though the strength with which he had rallied to recite the verses, had all fled, he asked:

"Tell me, must it all slip—the golden sand,—of life?"

"No, no, dear uncle," I exclaimed, "you need not let it slip, for—(and I felt my own voice tremble, it always will tremble when I try to tell of Him, the Lord Christ)—for there is One, waiting and ready, to change your feeble, wasting mortal life, into the dawn of an endless life—a life free from all temptation—a life pure from all sin; only ask Him, ask Him, dear uncle." And, seeing the look of reserve stealing again over his face, as clouds steal over the blue sky, I did

not speak for many a minute; I only sang, in a very low voice,—so low, I do not think they could have heard it even in the next room,—the hymn:

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!”

And he was moved—moved more than ever I had seen him before. And I could not help bending down and gently smoothing the thin gray hair back from his troubled, furrowed brow, while I softly repeated the words of Fenelon's prayer: “‘Oh, Lord, take my heart, for I cannot give it. And when Thou hast it, oh, keep it, for I cannot keep it for Thee, and save me in spite of myself, for Jesus Christ's sake.’”

And, surely—yes, surely, though it was very low, very tremulously uttered, I heard another voice than my own whispering to that prayer, “Amen.”

And, almost before the echo of that faintly murmured word was hushed in the room,

loud and clear rang out the Sabbath morning church-bells.

I did not stay for more words; I felt it was a time when my uncle wanted to be alone; I felt it was the hour when the seal was set to the prodigal's return, when he lived over again with his Heavenly Father the scene he had lived that first day of return to his earthly parent's home,—that day when, just as now, only two words were needed, the words of upward-looking faith, calling, “My Father,”—sure that that father, though so sinned against, would, with outstretched, pitying arms, reply, “My child.”

I longed to be alone, too, for oh! I do not know why I am so slow in learning to speak easily of Christ and God's love—so slow—I always want Jack so much at such times; he always knew just what to say, while I, even after all these long years, am still but a stammering child. And yet I never make the effort to tell of Christ without feeling—I hardly know why, yes, I do know—the light in my heart, that dear grandpapa calls

my winter fire, glowing with a radiance that makes me long to cry out loud the gladness thrilling there—the gladness that, almost with a spoken word, seems telling me that I may really believe that I am—

“Nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be,
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.”

XVII.

WHEN I re-entered my uncle's room, I found grandpapa and papa both there, and from their look and manner, I felt almost sure Uncle Rufus had said some word that had been sweet to their hearts, as the olive leaf of hope was sweet to the watchers who, for days, had seen only the dreary waste of water. Grandpapa was reading aloud from the Lord's prayer chapter in Matthew. It had evidently awakened peculiar interest on the part of my uncle, who half raised himself up in bed in his eagerness not to lose a word. But when grandpapa came to the verse, “If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness,” he sank back, covering his face with the bed-clothes, while

he sobbed aloud. I longed to go to him,—I longed to whisper some word of comfort; but grandpapa motioned me not, for he (grandpapa) so well knew the grief that shook my uncle's frame, and that moved his heart to tears that hour, was not a grief human word or tenderness could comfort; he knew only One could say to that trouble-tossed soul—"Be not afraid, only believe.

So we were silent,—silent, while I think every one of us was speaking to God.

Presently grandpapa softly repeated the words of the prayer he had been reading, saying, as he ended, in a tone so musing, it almost seemed as though he were unconscious of papa's and my presence:

"Yes—yes—it holds the all of regeneration,"—and then, still musingly, he dwelt on each petition, as though he were thinking aloud, saying: "*Our Father who art in Heaven*"—it reveals the dawn of light in a soul that has grasped the knowledge of God as a father; and the recognition of the Heavenly Fatherhood calls forth worship—

'Hallowed be Thy Name;' and the outgrowth of worship, it is ever obedience. Hence the petition—*'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven;'* so they stand, these three—knowledge, worship, and obedience—as types of the old Mosaic law, revealing rays of light that illumine the after-petitions with the brightness of gospel love. And out of love trust is born—trust that blends with the submission of a child, whose knowledge calls God Father, whose worship hallows Him, and whose obedience seeks only His kingdom,—a child who, with no dictating of gifts, looks up and says, *'Give us our daily bread,'* knowing because of the love that gives, the daily bread will supply all spiritual, as well as temporal needs; and yet, spite this knowledge, the soul is weak still, and out of its felt weakness, cries, *'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;'* and then they seem to end, the seeking petitions, as though when we can, with

earnest hearts, say thus far,—we are lifted to some Pisgah height, while we utter words, triumphant as clarion-notes of praise, for

Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever;—none of it ours,—but all His—all His!”

I remember just how grandpapa said those last words; and I think I remember too, almost word for word, just as he said it, the sermon-like talk which I have written down in this my diary.

As grandpapa ceased speaking, he rose, and went toward the bed where my uncle still lay, with his face hidden; gently bending over him, a whispered word he said, and then, in voice gentle as the voice of tenderest woman, he asked:

“My children, can we not all say together this Sabbath morning, that prayer Christ taught us?” and with uplifted hand he stood, that old, white-haired man, while his children, the middle-aged men (papa and my uncle), repeated, as had been their wont, in the innocent days of early boy-

hood, the words of prayer. So clear and firm sounded dear papa's voice, so broken and tremulous my uncle's,—and yet,—he said—said it all.

And then papa and I stole from the room, not returning till after the doctor had been—the doctor, whose vigilant, practiced eye, saw what we had not, the subtle something, the mysterious something, that told of the change that was near—so near.

XVIII.

AT noon-time, that day, the wind changed; the blue of the sky, that at morning had been so unclouded, was hidden; the soft, balmy air became chill and damp. And there was another change—a change that no longer we could fail to see; for quickly as the sunlight dimmed before the gathering clouds, so the light that had shone in my uncle's eyes grew dim; and yet there was such a look of peace on his countenance I did not think what was coming; but grandpapa and papa knew,—and toward nightfall I knew, too.

Kind old Mrs. Bond came to me and stayed till morning.

My uncle spoke but little after noon-time. We were so thankful that he was spared all

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prolonged suffering. Just for a little while, toward sunset, there was a brief time of mortal anguish; after that, only a few broken words were uttered, a feeble hand-clasp, and glance of love given,—and then, we watched in silence for the change,—watched till midnight, when I thought he slept, so gently his eyes closed, while over his face—the troubled, sin-marred face—a smile of peace stole, the very same smile that was on the boy's pictured face. Was it because his heart was the child's heart again?

A minute later Mrs. Bond led me away. "Is it death?" I whispered; "death come so quietly, for

'Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary, worn-out wind expires so soft.'"

"No, child," she softly replied. "Thank thy God it is not death, but *life*!"

XIX.

CARRIE came to me early the next morning, and, though I knew she longed to be at home with her husband and baby-boy, she stayed during the quiet days that followed.

They were peaceful days, even though the hush (so unlike in its mystery and awe to any other hush) that always comes with the shadow of death, was about our home. Peaceful days! for we could not doubt that though, for so many years, my uncle had willingly dwelt a captive in the land of bondage, whose ruler is evil, yet, at last, he had shaken off the captive's chains and gone Home, freed through Christ's forgiving love.

The tender Shepherd's love, that did not leave this weak one of His flock to be buf-

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feted and assailed by temptations through the discipline of long years, but straightway called him Home, to the pastures promised on the "high mountains of Israel."

And yet, while we call it tender Shepherd's love that takes, is not the love that leaves the sheep of His flock to meet and struggle with the conflicts of life as tender? Truly, I think it is.

I had such a dear talk with Carrie about this. It puzzled me so much at first, the wondering why my uncle needed such a brief trial—nothing more than just the yielding of his heart—and yet dear, good grand-papa had required so many long, wearisome (though he would not call them wearisome) years of discipline to perfect his faith.

Carrie smiled when I asked her, "Why it was thus?" and replied:

"It puzzles me too, Annie, why you needed the sharp, sudden heart-wrench that tore Jack from your earthly companionship, and yet—" and Carrie's smile deepened into one of those radiant smiles that now and

then flit across a face, when the eye of faith is taking broad, upward looks—looks that see high-up, spite the veil-clouds of mystery, while she said:

“Do you remember the maple-trees that grew side by side, guarding the door-way of the old farm-house at Mapletown, where we spent that autumn together, when we were children?”

“Remember them! yes, indeed, I do,” eagerly I answered.

“And do you remember, too,” Carrie continued, “how we wondered, growing, as they did, in the same soil, warmed by the same sunshine, nourished by the same rain-storms, that yet the branches of one waved green and leaf-laden in the Autumn wind, long after the other had showered down its wealth of crimson and yellow foliage?—and how, when we asked the reason why, we were told it was not the touch of the frost-king, as we had always thought, that flashed the leaves from green into brilliant tints, but because the time of their ripening had

come? And the only explanation we could win, even from our grave, white-haired host, was ‘That it did not take as long for one maple to ripen as it did for the other;’ so, while one was all aglow with brightness, the leaves of the other were left for more sunshine to fall upon them, for more wind to stir and wave them to and fro, for more rain to beat upon them.”

“It has always stayed by me,” she continued, “as a comforting type of the Christian’s life: we cannot tell, any more than we can tell the reason of the varying time for the ripening of the maple leaves, why it is that some souls seem to know but a brief trial-time before they are garnered by the Lord of the harvest, while others are years and years left to con, oftentimes through tears, the lesson all life is for—the lesson of trust in God. And yet,” and as she spoke, the smile that had faded from her face came back again, “it is the leaves that are the longest in ripening whose colors are the most abiding, not those we gather on the

first Autumn days, but those that have slowly changed, catching now a golden, and then a crimson hue, are the ones whose beauty keeps fresh and pleasure-*full* all through the long winter, just as we know your grandfather's life is fuller of rich, long-abiding lessons of trust, and truth, well-springs of joy, than it could be if his faith had not been ripened by so many years of discipline,—but,”—and Carrie's voice was very low, as she added, “always, I think, when such queries have filled our hearts, we find a margin by their side, where questionings are quieted—a margin, traced with the words Christ spake;” and she repeated from Matthew the twentieth chapter, from the first to the sixteenth verses.

Grandpapa and Fred came into the room as Carrie ceased speaking, and, sitting together—grandpapa, Carrie, Fred and me—grandpapa talked very tenderly to us of my uncle. He was so fearful, dear old grandpapa, especially for Fred, that the influence of the sudden change in my uncle's feelings,

which filled our hearts with glad hope, that through trusting in Christ for pardon, he was at rest, might lessen to Fred the solemn, pitiful warning of his life—a life that, humanly speaking, was a wreck.

Every word that grandpapa uttered was laden with tenderness,—laden with that gentleness which was not unmindful that no man can judge brother-man. “For unless we know (what only God can know) how much another is tempted, how can we know how much is resisted?”

This fear of lessening the present importance of consecrating life to Christ *now*, by dwelling on my uncle's return to his father's God, just at the last minute, made grandpapa, too, very anxious that no exaggerated word, picturing the last hours of peace, should be spoken to the few of our friends (only those we knew best) who came to us at the funeral hour.

So the service was only the reading of the blessed Resurrection words, the offering of a heartfelt prayer, the singing of

that tender hymn, tender for those remaining, tender for the one gone,—that hymn, that in long-ago days, found utterance in the heart of the old Greek patriarch, to whom Christ's storm-quieting words were so dear It was Carrie who sang it.

"Fierce was the wild billow,
Dark was the night;
Oars labored heavily,
Foam glimmered white;
Mariners trembled,
Peril was nigh;
Then said the God of God:
'Peace! it is I!'

"Ridge of the mountain-wave,
Lower thy crest!
Wail of the stormy wind,
Be thou at rest!
Peril can none be,
Sorrow must fly,
Where saith the Light of Light:
'Peace! it is I!'

"Jesu, Deliverer!
Come Thou to me!
Soothe Thou my voyaging
Over life's sea!
Thou, when the storm of death
Roars, sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of Truth!
'Peace! it is I!'"

And then, for a minute, the measured, slow tread of footfalls had sounded in our home,—and again, all was hushed,—and we knew they had borne away the silent form,—away to a quiet resting-place, beyond the noisy city streets, a resting-place where flowers would bloom, where the warm sunshine would fall, where the little birds would loiter to sing. And it was comforting to know this, even while our hearts were glad, with the deeper comfort, that what we loved best in my uncle had gone far, far beyond the noisy city and the quiet resting-place,—gone home to God.

It was late before papa and Fred had returned, but grandpapa waited up for their coming. Dear papa was very weary, so weary, he said scarce a word; but he brought to grandpapa a handful of grass-blades gathered from my grandmother's grave, and,—they said more than an hour-full of spoken words could have done. Among them I found the half-opened bud of a violet! Ah! it is such a tender season,

the spring-time, for the grave-side mourner; a season so sweet and laden with Resurrection hopes. I am so glad my uncle was called from us then, and not when the cold snow was on the ground, or when the fevered heat of mid-summer had withered grass and flower,—so glad he went in the Spring, when every whisper is of Him, the Resurrection and the Life.

XX.

THE next morning, when I awoke, I knew it had lifted "the shadow of death" from our home. The shadow of death!—What do they mean, the words? I fell into wondering, as I laid wide awake for an hour or more before rising-time.

Always, without much thought, I had associated them with the last hours of life here on earth; always I had felt as though the promised "Rod and Staff" belonged peculiarly, almost exclusively, to the time when passing through the dark waters of the river of death, the soul so needs the support of Christ.

It is such a dear knowledge to feel thus, that He, the One always near, and who knows every step of the way, the way seal-

ed from us by silence and mystery, is enfolding the soul, as it drifts out—beyond the hearing of mortal voice, however loving; beyond the feeling of mortal hand-clasp, however tender;—His presence a staff on which to lean, His Rod a guide to which to cling.

But, as I thought that morning of the "Valley of the shadow of death," it seemed to me, not only to belong to the last hour, but I felt it to be a valley of shadows, through which, in the midst of life, sometimes from the very midst of joy, Christ calls His followers to walk; a valley in which, were it not for the Rod and Staff, we would stumble and fall amid the darkness.

It is so strange how we pass sometimes from bright light into it; how the shadows steal over us, chill and drear, thrilling our hearts like an ice-cold hand; and yet, only a little while before, like Peter on the vision-mountain, we have seen "the glory," and then, suddenly, "a cloud has come out of the very

glory"—a cloud overshadowing us as it did the disciples of old, and, like them, we have "feared, as we entered the cloud," till from it the Voice has sounded—the voice proclaiming Christ, the "Son beloved of the Father," and with that revelation in our hearts, always there are hopes too—hopes that are bright with mountain-top glimpses of God's and Christ's love; hopes that, like the disciple band, we "keep close." But the times of fear are truly valleys filled with death-like shadows; I wonder if they—the shadows—find birth in our hearts, because we cling so in our earthly loves and interests to permanency. I wonder if the daily cross Christ bids us carry for His sake, is not the willingly trusting amid the changes that come, cheerfully going on our way, knowing He guides, and that it is His will, that we see only step by step of the path before us.

During those few glad summer days when Jack and I were together,—the beautiful days after he had told me the happy, happy secret

of his love,—we fell into the way of giving, with our good-morning greeting to one another, some brief, helpful, comfort verse. “We will always keep it up,” Jack said: “always thus link, as life goes on, the toil-some mid-day and the deepening twilight hours, with a ‘morning thought.’”

I remember so well, that first day after he had said thus, how he whispered,

“Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work.”

Jack never thought what fuel those few lines would yield me for my winter fire—the cold, cold heart-winter that came after he was called from me, *my* valley-of-the-shadow-of-death winter,—when every sweet memory that flashed into light on that fire seemed to glow with a brightness (all the dearer, perchance, for the darkness about me) that lit up even Christ’s love with fuller radiance.

This custom of every morning finding some verse, some thought, that comes from

another tempted, tried, sorrowful, or glad heart, has stayed by me all the years since Jack began it, and sometimes the verse, like a sweet musical refrain, seems almost to sound from my foregone thoughts. It was so the morning after I had been thinking of the valley of shadows. I was a little late, and hastily feeling I had no time to search for a motto, I took up a volume of Keble’s that lay on my table, and my finger rested on the words:

“When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?”

Not long after breakfast that day we received a dear package of letters from Aunt Mary and Mr. Grafton. They were such a comfort to us! I do not think, ever since Aunt Mary married, had we so wanted her as during the weeks of my uncle’s illness,—and it had seemed such a hard part of separation, being divided by the weary stretch of broad ocean-miles, and the knowing that the present, our present, so all-absorbing to us, would be

the past, before she could hear of it. I had just finished reading the letters to grandpapa, when Meta Stanhope came—came with a light shining from her eyes, that hinted her gladness to me before she told it;—and—then—in our home, where only such a little while before I had listened to the broken, feeble words of one whose earth-life was ending—in our home, where the light of that mortal life had gone out, I listened to another story, the story of a life in its dawn—the story of a life, haloed with the mystical light of human love.

Dear little Meta, she was timid as a bird that only half sings its song aloud, as half playfully, half earnestly—no, more than half earnestly—nestling close to me, she softly repeated the German love song:

“I asked my heart what love is?
It giveth answer meet;
Two souls, and but one thought;
Two hearts, but one heart-beat.

“And what is pure, pure love?
When self is quite forgot.

And when is love the deepest?
When word it uttereth not.

“And when is it the richest?
When all it has it gives!
And what the words it speaketh?
Voiceless it loves, it lives.”

Looking up eagerly as she ended, with eyes that shone like stars, though there were tears there too, she quickly hid her face again on my shoulder, while, in a soft voice, she asked:

“Tell me, Miss Annie, is it true—the song?”

Dear child! God grant she may find it true; God grant life may be to her beautiful, satisfying, as her young heart now dreams.

XXI.

THAT talk with dear little Meta, it has started so many tender memories of my own dream-time. How, as life goes on, we learn the truth, that not even the least event connected with heart experience is ever lost; that everything God sends to us, whether of joy or grief, is laden with a meaning—a meaning hidden, perchance, for many a year, but which some seemingly trifling thing will suddenly illumine with light,—a meaning that pervades everything that in any way is linked with the hour when the mind received an impression. It makes life—even the most humble and lowliest life—such a rich harvest-time, the knowing that only a sweet odor, a spring flower, a winter's snow-flake, the shimmer

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of leaves in the summer wind, or the rippling of water, the hum of bees, the song of birds, may wake up memories long silent, but dear, very dear. For surely, never yet was a life lived without a memory-treasure, even if it be only a bird's song, a flower's beauty, or a glimmer of sunshine, and buds and blossoms, for the spring and the summer, they belong to all, rich and poor alike.

I wish it were not so subtle and strange a thing, this power of impressions, to hold in dimness, thoughts that are inwrought with our by-gone, and yet to flash them into life, without a moment's warning.

It is as mysterious as the process that cages the intangible fragrance of the rose, the perfume of the orange flower, and the sweet breath of a thousand blooms, till from the bruised leaves and withered petals, are distilled the essence of the flower odor, that is sweet for perfume and flavor.

Just so, I think, human hearts are like the flowers, full of intangible sweetness, that

sometimes can only be caught and retained, as they, the hearts, like the rose leaves and orange blossoms, are bruised, and subjected to the slow process that brings lasting sweetness, from transient,—lasting fragrance, from vanishing.

Thinking thus of impressions, as all freighted with meanings and memories, there seems no end to the golden links of the chain we call "remembrance,"—the chain that binds our past with our present; just the touch of a hand, the gleam of a smile, how in a second's space of time, they bridge for us hours, that recorded by the calendar, would count up into months and years. It is so beautiful to feel this memory chain, even though it bands dreary days and leaden hours, is still held by the hand of love,—love, that at the time of our need, will, as it sways back and forth, flash from it brightness, for though sometimes we only see the "light-glints" through the mist of tears, just as the sun only sees the rainbow's beauty through the falling rain-drops, we know the

brightness is there, as the sun knows the bow of promise is arching the cloud-banks that lay heavy toward the horizon.

I like so much the way a tender woman singer expresses this feeling, that I have so imperfectly framed into words,—her song is so sweet and true to me, I call it *my* song too:

"Sorrows humanize our race;
Tears are the showers that fertilize this world;
And memory of things precious keepeth warm
The heart that once did hold them."

"They are poor
That have lost nothing; they are poorer far
Who, losing, have forgotten; they most poor
Of all, who lose and wish they *might* forget.
For life is one, and in its warp and woof
There runs a thread of gold that glitters fair,
And sometimes in the pattern shows most sweet
Where there are sombre colors. It is true
That we have wept, but O! this thread of gold,
We would not have it tarnish; let us turn
 Oft and look back upon the wondrous web,
And when it shineth sometimes we shall know
That memory is possession."

* * * * *

When I remember something promised me,
But which I never had, nor can have now,

Because the promiser we see no more
 In countries that accord with mortal vow;
 When I remember this, I mourn,—but yet
 My happier days are not the days when I forget."

But something beside sweet memories, my talk with Meta has awakened in my heart; fear has come with it too.—It is such a hard thing, the really and truly laying the axe to the root of the tree of—what shall I call it?—the tree of hopes, of imaginings, or of motives, that spreads its branches so widely and so leaf-laden in the garden of my heart.

Hearing Meta, in her soft voice, murmur of her human love and joy, has made me see, almost as though it were reflected in a mirror, the depths in my own heart,—that—that—I have left unfathomed for so long, and,—it makes me shiver and grow cold, to think, perhaps—perhaps—all these years since Jack left me, after all the many pages I have written in this and my other little diary-book, about regarding Jack with a love, that is in entire subordination to the

higher love, my love for Christ the Lord,—yet—yet—all the while, just as much in need have I been, as I was that summer day, of the warning Jack traced in the sea-shore sand, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Can it be, that I am in danger of making my love for Jack an idol still? Can it be, that we may have idols in heaven as well as on earth? Can it be, that while I bade Meta remember, that even the dearest and the purest human love will fade and lose its purity and sweet earnestness, if not kept constantly in the warmth and radiance of Christ's love,—while I told her that love, beautiful love, is not safe out of His presence, quoting the words of another, who says, "No love or friendship, that is not based on a love of Him, and a desire to help others up to Him, can be always abiding, and the reason why so many earthly loves and friendships fail, is because they are founded on love of self instead of Him?" Can it be, while I told her all this, I needed

the warning, perhaps more, far more than Meta did?—Oh, it humbles me so,—humbles and almost frightens me, for, like a timid child, who creeps away from the dark shadows that lie between him and home—the shadows that must be braved before the rest, security, and peace of home can be reached,—so I shrink back from fathoming my heart's secrets, and yet, before I can dwell truly in the Light of His Love, I must fathom them,—the axe, it must be laid to the root of the tree.—But, I do not think I could do it; no, I do not think I could do it, were it not for the sure knowledge that the God who sees *all* (and yet who bids me *show* Him all), all my weakness, all my little faith and faulty love for Him and His Christ, is a God who looks on the hearts of His children, not only beholding their thoughts and motives in the clear light of His infinite wisdom and purity, but a God who looks with infinite love, and infinite pardon too.

Thinking of my heavenly Father's love

thus, as a blending of infinite knowledge with infinite pardon, I catch a glimpse of such a beautiful trailing cloud of glory and gladness, with which to halo earthly love and friendship, I long to tell little Meta of it.

I wish the old maxim, "Love is blind," would give place, and steal away before the truer maxim, "Love is open-eyed,"—wide-open-eyed, for it is just here, I think, one of its greatest dearnesses comes in. It is so precious to know, even while it deeply humbles us, that as our hearts are open to the all-seeing eye of Perfect Love, so they are open too, to the gaze of the dearest human love; open as a page, and as easily to be read as the well-known stories of our most prized volumes, our best beloved books, which are none the less dear to us, because here and there a comma fills the place of a colon, here and there an exclamation is in place of an interrogation, because now and then a blur has dimmed the clearness of the print, or a misfold in the paper marred the smooth sheet,—yet we do not mind, for, spite the

misplaced commas and colons, spite the misfolded leaf, so well *we* know the true meaning of the poem, almost we are glad of the very errors that may hide from others, less loving and knowing than we, the secret sweetness, that to careless gazers, seems only a mar; almost, we are glad of the folded leaf, for while it breaks the smoothness of the page, it yet marks for us a line, that underlies some word of twofold significance, just as, when we love a friend, sometimes of the very traits that seem to others faults and shadows, we whisper "dear heart," for they are to us the revealers of a hidden sweetness, through which we catch glimpses, that illumine the individuality of the one we love. I wonder whether these flashes of individuality, our own peculiar self-hood to another, make the dawn of love? I wonder whether they explain the puzzling mystery of why people, so all unlike, love and are happy together? Yes, surely, love is no blind thing, out so far-sighted, it sees what others miss, and because of this seeing, it forgives and

casts out of sight the unlovely, clothing it in beauty, till what to us may seem uninterestingness, to others may shine in golden hues. Realizing this, a glow of romance hovers about the very dullest (as we see) lives, looks forth from the very plainest faces, sounds in the most unmusical voices. For all have had some one to love them, some one to know the "hidden sweetness;" all have been little children once.

I have wandered from the thought with which I began to write. The thought of God's knowing us perfectly, as a dear comfort, for indeed I think it is, though, alas! that knowledge knows of so many a broken resolution, so many an aspiration, that at morning has soared like the lark heavenward, but that, before noon-time, has with broken wing and feeble song, flown low and earthward again. Or, like some warrior, with the dawning day, gone forth helmeted and shielded for the conflict, to return at nightfall, foot-sore and weary, with helmet bullet pierced, and shield battered and bruised.

And yet, spite all the broken resolutions, the aspirations that have been only aspirations, spite our wanderings and waywardness, would we give up the knowing that God knows us through and through? No, surely we would not,—and yet—yet—“He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” While I have been writing, the day has ended, the sweet May-day,—the light from the westward window that flooded into my room in bright bands of sunshine when I began, has faded and gone, till now, scarcely can I trace the lines of my diary, so I will put aside pen and paper, and go to dear old grandpapa,—go and sit with him as the shadows deepen.

“My time,” he calls it, the even-tide, “for truly, child,” he said to me, not long ago, “it is even-tide with me—the even-tide of life.”

I never can forget grandpapa’s smile when I whispered in reply, those words of the disciples, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent,—and those after words—“And,—He went in, to tarry with them.”

XXII

I TOLD grandpapa something of what I had been writing, and then we fell into a quiet talk about individuality, and the beautiful joy and intensity that seems to hover about human love, as summer winds play about flowers, when we interpret the human by the heavenly—the heavenly which is as a golden-lettered index to the beautiful story of earthly joy.

Grandpapa’s words have opened out to me such broad, pleasant pathways of thought, and they have helped me so much in defining to myself the feeling that I tried to express yesterday in written words,—the feeling that, put down by pen and ink on paper, was so visionary and half-concealed. I wonder why it is, that we, feel so much

that we cannot say out; sometimes I think it seems as though we were walking, in a spiritual sense, through experiences, that only in a dim, shadowy way, when we endeavor to express them, reveal to us the invisible things of God; and yet, that unexpressed by words, are laden with meanings and beauty that make our hearts glad with the sense of a love, tender and mindful, till we find joys springing up everywhere.

I asked grandpapa to tell me why it was thus; and I asked him to tell me, too, why there is such dear heart-comfort in the feeling that Christ knows us through and through; and why one of our greatest happinesses, in the love of dearest earthly friends, is the sweet surety that they know us—that nothing is hidden from them. And yet, when we say this feeling out into words, we are straightway crushed by the thought of our own unfitness to be known by Christ, our Lord—to be known even by an earthly friend, all just as we truly are.

"Ah! child," grandpapa answered, "why

do you ask? Do you not know many of our most comfort-laden feelings, most precious hopes and cherished trusts, are not to be framed into words—are not to be defined by why and wherefore, for—

"It is not much, that heart to heart
Can tell in words of human speech;
Its deep recesses lie apart,
Where only thought to thought can reach.

"That is not friendship which can ask,
And tell the best it seeks and gives;
That is not love which can unmask
Itself to any thing that lives.

"The deeper motions of the soul
Are never heard by human ear;
That which we cannot speak is all
That we most truly hope and fear."

No, we cannot tell what love is by language, we cannot define sympathy by words, any more than we can explain why we are glad to feel Christ knows us perfectly—glad, even though we mourn that in that knowledge His eye beholds, in the garden of our hearts, many a weed-grown tangle, many a blighted flower and withered leaf."

And then, after a few minutes' silence grandpapa softly repeated the Bible verse: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."

And—and—sitting there in the dim light, for it was dark, except for a stray moon-beam that stole in through the window, across which I had not yet drawn the curtain, I seemed to see it all; the woman, burdened with sin, weeping at His feet—the feet of Christ—the woman whose heart was heavy and like to break because of sin; and yet who was glad, glad as a child, because, though her sin was all known, yet she was forgiven by Him, the Lord, *for* she loved much.

This way of grandpapa's of ending his talks with me by some gospel word, has grown almost into a habit—I like it so much, sometimes I think he is strewing all my onward life-way with pleasure by it, for they come to me so often, even now, and so refreshingly, the verses he has quoted as seal-words to his talks. When I told him so he

drew me close to him and nestled my head on his shoulder, as he used to do when I was a tiny girl, while he whispered:

"Not for pleasure do I give them, Annie, child, but for fagots—fagots, child, that may now and then give forth a beam of light as you lay them on your winter fire."

And—with grandpapa's kiss he whispered another word, a precious word, too sacred and too dear for me to write, even here, in my own heart-book. I wonder why grandpapa loves me so—I wonder why—but, that wondering belongs to the "why and wherefore," that he says we are not to define.

Sometimes I think it almost seems as though, when we are tenderly loved, we become, in a mystical way, like those old pictures of saints and martyrs, that are encompassed by angel faces—faces, some with earnest, thoughtful eyes—some with laughing merry eyes; faces that at first we see not, but that, when our eyes are open to behold them, we find peeping out at us from

everywhere. It is sweet to think just so; to those who love us, we seem all encircled by the loveliness, typified by the fair, cherub faces, from which shine smiles and earnest looks.

But I am filling my page, leaving hardly room for the part of our talk on individuality, and that is what I most want to remember.

"Somewhere," said grandpapa, "I once read, that 'the individuality of each man, is that peculiar influence with which he is intrusted, for the good of society.'"

I never had thought of it thus—never had thought that in our own personality, our own peculiar selfness, lies so much of influence.

When Martha came in and lit the gas, grandpapa bade me read a page or two from a little book that lay open upon his table; the idea of which was, "that as in music, not only the notes, but also the pauses, are according to the plan and mind of the composer, and instinct with the life

and spirit which breathes through the whole; so the mysterious and silent places of Scripture are according to, and in harmony with, the wisdom of the eternal spirit. And yet, this does not, as is sometimes objected, destroy the individuality of the sacred record; for who can doubt, even though they cannot reconcile the two facts, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the individuality of the writers. Moses and David, Solomon and Paul—why, they each reveal, in their books, their own peculiar history, character, disposition, and mode of thought; so that the objection, as to the guidance of the spirit interfering with independence of thought, vanishes."

I have not given the exact words Adolphe Saphir wrote, but yet, I think, they tell the significance of his page.

Afterward he writes, "Scripture teaches us, that God's children alone have individuality in the highest sense of the word; they are called by *name*; every one receives a name, which is a secret between him and the Lord."

It is so beautiful to realize this, so beautiful to feel that there is no massing of Christ's followers together, but that even the least lamb of His fold has its own name—its own place, when "He carries the lambs in His bosom."

There is so much in a name—so much—why, just some little name, some little word of endearment, will thrill through and through our hearts. And there is such a mystery about the choice of names, too. Carrie once said to me, she thought that "through our 'love names,' we have a fuller insight into the complexity and many-sidedness of our natures, than we have in any other way." Certainly I think they tell us more truly, perhaps, than anything else in the way of words, just what we are to others. Sometimes I wonder if Christ does not reveal to us, in hours of deepest spiritual communion and felt nearness to Him, the special Bible verse, that holds the secret of our name, the name by which He knows us. I love to think that this is why, all

through the Bible, verses that hold the hints of names, are strewn as thickly as flowers strew June-time meadows.

I love to think that, perhaps, the verse that came to me when I stood that early morning, with the dewy freshness of dawn still about me, with Jack by my side (that beautiful morning, the last of my summer-time mornings), when the sunshine was all about us, when the golden sand at our feet was strewn with rosy mosses, that Christ whispered, with the verse that came to me then, a name—the name that stayed by me all through the dark, dark hours that followed—such a tender name—tender for my joy—yet tenderer for my sorrow.

I wonder, too, if, in a mysterious way, when we dearly love an earthly friend, we do not catch some faint echo of the name by which Christ calls them.

As I write, I think of one whose name is written in that verse, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels." And my eyes fill with tears

—while my heart is full of smiles for very gladness—because—I think—yes, surely I know, the “jewel name” that will be theirs when Home is reached.

And now my page is full, and I have left unwritten the half I meant. Will it be just so when we come to the end of life’s page? Will we have left undone the half we meant?

XXIII.

HOW little I imagined, when last I wrote in this my thought-book (for I think it is more than a diary), that before I turned its leaves again, so many weeks would have flown by, and that, instead of looking up from my paper to see only a patch of blue sky framed in by brick walls, I would look up with never a thing between me and the blue except the waving branches of the trees, clothed in their beautiful garment of tender, early summer-time green; that, instead of hearing the dull, incessant rumble of wheels, and the confusion of city sounds, all would be still about me, except the singing of the birds, the humming of the bees, and the rippling of the breeze-stirred leaves;—and yet it has all come

about so naturally, just as plans, that are the outgrowth of the tender love others feel for us, always do, I think.

A little look of weariness must have left its impress on my tell-tale face, I suppose, for, try though I did to persuade grandpapa and papa that I was quite well, they both shook their heads; and so one day, just in the few hours between sunrise and sunset, it was all arranged that Fred and May should leave their boarding-place, and come home and stay with grandpapa and papa, while, all June and July, I was to be in the beautiful country.

"Drinking in health, and losing the weary look from your face, my darling," said papa.

"Gathering fresh fuel for your heart's fire—fresh fuel, child," whispered grandpapa.

And none of my remonstrances would they heed, but every one they put aside, with loving words and loving deeds—deeds in which May, Carrie, and Meta shared, for

almost by magic seemed the preparations for my going completed almost without my knowing how, my trunk was packed and ready; and on the first of the June days I was whirling away from the city, away from home, grandpapa and papa.

Really I do not think I very much needed the change which their love thought so necessary, for I was not ill, only just a little tired and worn, because of the long weeks of anxiety and watching that had come before the ending of dear uncle Rufus' life—the weeks when it had seemed to my little faith as though perhaps he would leave us, with no sign given that he had come to the light found in trusting in Christ; and yet, all that time, I had known how constant grandpapa's prayers for uncle Rufus were; but still I was fearful—I wonder, will I never learn the truth, that the best wisdom the follower of Jesus can know, is just simple faith, and faithfulness—(why did I write in that line above, "life ended?" for "*life* can never *end*, it can only *change*").

What a long digression I have made, from the why, of my waking up, to find myself in the beautiful country—so beautiful, now in the first freshness of summer; and yet,—is it wrong?

“But since the falling of that heavy blow,
God’s earth has never seemed to me so fair.”

Yet, I love it all well, so well! Any way, whether I needed the change or not, I am quite strong again now.

It was to Aunt Stella I came, and spite the many years since my previous visit, I find her so unaltered. She says I am the same too, though she adds, “Not the same.”

I begin to think age is all a thing of comparison, and that with every year that comes to us, we see it differently because we measure it by our own onward steps, till sometimes it almost seems as though those whom in childhood and early youth we thought old, very old, are younger than they were then.

I could not help laughing, with a laugh

that ended in half a sigh, when yesterday I recognized the truth hidden in the fact that Aunt Stella certainly did not seem older to me, then when I was here six years ago; and then I fell into thinking of the unchanging *seeming* of all whom I love, and I find it so with every one. Why, Carrie, I feel toward and regard her as scarce more than a girl, and yet her baby-boy has taken his first walk, and uttered his first word. And papa, he seems to me just as he has always done, no older, though silver-threads here and there shine among his dark hair.

It is pleasant to think age is thus something that really never touches us, with those who love us, that to them we always stay in a certain way “young;” because the eye of love sees behind the time-marked face—sees deeper than wrinkles and snow-white hair—sees the soul, that never really grows old, any more than angels do, though it may grow weary. Yet—the weariness—it is all a thing of earth, that will vanish, like morning mist before the rising sun, when our true Home

is reached. Yes, I am sure it is just as Jack and the country minister said, so long ago, that the words age, old age—certainly when applied to the Christian (and I think to every one),—are truly “earth-words,” and that *there*, where “a thousand years are but as one day,” they are forgotten.

Aunt Stella has given me the same room that I occupied when with her before—such a pleasant room, with windows, I tell her, that look almost everywhere, for from one I have a wide, open stretch of blue sky and high hills, with a calm, restful space of meadow-lands, banded by the winding course of a quiet water-brook; while from another window I look out down the long, shady street of the village; and from still another, westward, toward the old-fashioned garden.

“Where, they tell me,” Aunt Stella said, with a smile, “I let too many common flowers grow; but I am satisfied,” she added, “for they are all beautiful to me.”

So they grow together, gay tulips, orange

and crimson-striped tiger-lilies, the fleur-de-lis, so softly tinted with deep purple and shadowy violet, and stately white lilies, side by side; while seringas and lilacs vie with one another in tossing sweetness into the air, these early summer days.

In Aunt Stella's garden there is a place, too, for all lowly-growing plants, star-like snow-drops, violets, blue hyacinths, and great patches of lilies of the valley, with here and there clumps of ragged-robin, beds of mignonette and candy tuft, bright-eyed pinks, and roses,—climbing roses,—and honeysuckles, all fragrant, and glad with their wealth of blooms, during these June days.

At the far end of the garden, sunflowers grow. Sunflowers! How I used to wonder, when I was a young girl, whether they ever were tired, turning their yellow eyes all the time to follow the sun.

I remember so well the great clump of them, that grew down by the garden-gate of the old farmhouse, where Carrie and I once spent a long summer-time together.

I used to read over and over in my "Mythology book," the story of the Clytie, who all day long fixed her gaze upon the sun, never thinking it would hide away from her; because—because—she loved it so—loved it so well, that she watched it till its light, seeming never so lovely, tender and beautiful, it sank out of sight behind the blue mountains; and, perhaps because I was young then, so young, I could not in those days read the Clytie's story without my eyes filling with tears. Why is it?—for I am no longer young (here, where we count years),—that my eyes, they grow dim now as I write this tale of the mystical maiden of fancy, who mourned and bowed her head, never to lift it up again; when the sun had gone—the maiden who, the legend tells, wept bitter tears—tears that fell on the ground, where fell, too, the first morning rays of the rising sun, and from where a tiny green shoot upsprang—a green shoot, that grew as the day went by into a tall plant, from which opened a flower—a

golden-eyed flower, with color clear and bright as sunlight; and so, the people called the flower a "sunflower."

I repeated the old legend this morning to Aunt Stella, as we stood in the broad piazza, looking out over the garden.

"A legend of life," she called it, this story of the Clytie; "is it?"

And then, after a few minutes' silence, Aunt Stella, half musingly, and as though she had forgotten having told me so before, said,

"They tell me I have too many common flowers in my garden; but they are all precious to me;" and, in a low voice, she continued, "I do not think there are, or ever have been, any common flowers, since that day when Christ crowned the blossoms of the field with His blessing, saying, 'Consider the lilies;'—never a way-side rose or daisy has bloomed since, I think, but has whispered of His love and care."

The fullness of nature's meanings and holy teachings, is such a favorite topic with Aunt Stella.

"I am much alone, child," she said to me the other day, when speaking of it, "and I find much comfort in my garden; for somehow," she added, "the flowers that bloom right out where the sunshine, the refreshing showers, the cooling dew-drops fall on them, just as they come from heaven, seem so much fuller of divine messages to me than those which bloom where the light and water is tempered before it reaches them, and where the dew-drops never fall on them at all. Like different Christians, Annie child, flowers which come into bloom amid such different surroundings, seem to me—for while neither could blossom without the sun, and the rain,—the garden, meadow, and woodland flowers, are peculiarly precious types of those followers of Christ who, with wide-open hearts, live in the full light of the 'Sun of Righteousness,' and who drink daily strength from the 'Brook in the Way.'"

I never had thought before of thus regarding the outdoor and the indoor blooms as emblems of Christian life; but

surely those that grow out under the blue sky, up-springing in rock clefts and dusty road-sides, as well as in sweet nooks of clover-fields and garden-beds, do seem to liken those Christians whom we find "going about," in highways and by-ways, like as He went who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." While the other flowers, that are wooed by care into bloom, seem so like that class of Christians whose experiences are fanned into warmth by the opinions of others—those Christians who, content with what man can teach of Him our Lord, forget that no man, however eloquent and earnest, can do more than point another toward that nearness to Christ that is incommunicable.

All day long those morning words of Aunt Stella have been giving me comfort and pleasure; not a way-side bud or flower, but has seemed, since she uttered them, laden with fuel for my heart's-fire; for they all, buds and blossoms, are so rich in lessons of God's love and care.

XXIV.

IT interests me so much, the finding, as I do, that the very same (in spirit, though in expression, perchance, different) sorrows, joys, temptations, victories over self, and puzzling life-questions, enter into and make up the daily experience of country and city people alike; for I find almost as many needing comfort and sympathy, even here in this out-of-the-way nook of the world, where Aunt Stella lives, as I am wont to meet in crowded New York. I can but wonder now, why, when I left home, I let the breaking-off from my accustomed cares,—the little occupations and services which I sometimes call “my duties,” trouble me, as though I were going to a place where there would not be a thing to do.

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“My duties!” Deep down in my heart, I am sure, I always feel that I mistake in using the word *duty* in place of privilege, just as sometimes I misuse the word *Charity*. “Our charities!” How we think and talk thus about the services Christ sends us to perform, calling them our charities, all-forgetting they are not ours,—but His,—forgetting that the charity is His Love which prompts our hearts to care for His needy ones,—His love, which bestows upon us the gift to give. For without His willing and aiding, we could not give, any more than the purple grapes, rich and full of fragrant juices, could ripen if broken from the stem, that all the while is nourished by living sap, up-welling from the vine’s root. Christ,—His love, “all and in all,” it is that which makes the giving of which there is so much among men as unlike as snow-flakes are to dew-drops; for the giving that is done not from love to Jesus, is cold—cold as the snow,—I think, all wanting in the something that is the blessed part of giv-

ing,—while that, that is because of love to Christ, falls, even though it be but a widow's mite, laden with healing for weary hearts, as the dew is laden with refreshment for drooping flowers and grass-blades on hill-sides and meadows; and yet "no lily or snow-drop can be more beautiful than the blossom of the cold, as it falls in starry crystals, that are ethereal and spiritual, like the ghosts of summer flowers." Just like the gifts of those, who give without love to Christ, are often gracious to record, pleasant to behold, like the flowers of the snow; but when we would hold them in our hands, clasp them to our hearts, like the snow-flakes, they are cold—cold as ice-morsels,—but I do not like to write thus of the snow, for it was by the falling snow that dear grandpapa gave me that tender lesson in withholding judgment on the deeds of others; and yet it expresses just what I mean,—that, love to Christ gives a fullness, a dearness to sometimes only a smile or softly-spoken word, that makes them far

more precious than richest gift of earthly comforts.

I never realized this as I have done, since one winter's day, when I went with Carrie to visit a suffering, dying woman, whose home of poverty was a dreary back room in the attic of a crowded tenement-house. Many beside Carrie had been kind to the sufferer, some had done far more than she, in tangible expression of their kindness, and yet, though "They have been good to me— all good to me—so good," the poor woman said in her feeble voice, as she pointed with her thin, trembling hand to the comforts that had found their way into that wretched place, "it's she;" and her eyes rested on Carrie, with a light in them that was beautiful to see,—while, as she spoke, a note of tenderness, sweet as music, sounded in her tone, though her voice was husky and low.

"It's she that gives me that, that's worth more than all the heaps o' good things the others has brought,—for ye see, Miss, she kind o' smiles on me, with a look as though

she had just come from a-talking with Him, Jesus, who pities, she says, such poor folks as I be,—a smile, like as though she felt a kind o' love for me—for me—

And tears, shining tear-drops, had rolled down the trouble-marked face of the woman, hardly more than a girl in years, and yet so aged, by that which counts faster than years count.

Presently she continued :

"It always" (and again the light shone in her eyes, as she looked at Carrie) "seems as though she had just come, I say, from speaking to Him, as had said to her, 'along with yer giving, give them—the poor, sinning things—a bit of love,'"—Love born of Him, who alone can truly teach us what love is; for "God is Love," or, as the old translation has it, "God is Charity, which is Love." Yes, love, it only can teach us how we may find entrance, by sympathy, into sorrowing hearts.

Sympathy! I remember hearing Jack once say, he thought that word richer,

perhaps, in expressing the nearness of Jesus to us than any other, fuller even than love, for "sympathy is love perfected by experience."

Can we only learn it, then, this sympathy through suffering ourselves? Is suffering so subtle and many-meaning a thing, that to those who know it, all grief is unsealed and laid open for them to tenderly minister unto? "If you would be a son of consolation, if you would know the priestly gift of sympathy, if you would pass through the intercourse of daily life, with the delicate tact which never inflicts pain, you must be content to pay the price of the costly education; like Him—you must suffer." It was thus Robertson wrote.

"Content to pay!" Ah! I think, if we could be true sons of consolation, we would add to that word content, grateful to pay.

But I have wandered from what I sat down to write; it was of Aunt Stella I meant to tell, and her simple, "dew-drop" like ways of doing for others. All her life long

she has lived in this quiet village; and yet, like sea-shells on the ocean-beach, all the time, from far and near, some love-deed of hers is drifting up and blossoming in lives far scattered.

It is so beautiful to know this far out-reaching power for good, that a life that seems almost hidden from the busy world may exert.

"We never can be so hidden, Annie," she said to me last night, "but that we may find, if we seek, something to do for Christ and those dear to Him; and this is why so many gospel-words are laden with double meaning; and while we should take them in their literal sense, we should heed, too, this other, and perhaps, deeper significance;" and Aunt Stella smiled a tender smile, as she said: "Think of this, as revealed in the verses that tell us of the hungry and thirsty, the unclothed, and the sick, and tell me, do they not point toward those whose greatest need is to be told of the 'Bread of Life,' of that 'Water of which

if any man drink he shall never thirst again, of the 'white raiment,' and of the 'Great Physician?'"—and she added, "And for this blessed knowledge, to come to those we love, we may seek, even though our lives be all shut away from active doing, shut away, perchance, in darkened rooms of suffering, or hidden, it may be, in out-of-the-way homes, far from the bustling tide of life—yet we may share in the blessed privilege of ministering, for we can pray—and prayer wins the blessing, child; for no earthly bounds can trammel prayer, no limited sphere of action; by it we can seek a blessing for those leagues and leagues away from the sound of our human voice,—and, you know," Aunt Stella continued, "the promise linked to the prayer of faith—of faith, do not forget, child, it is to *that* prayer an answer is promised, and faith is the trust, which believes where it does not see; so, if to your prayer, answer *seems* withheld, remember, 'Only believe.'"

Some of the old customs which Aunt

Stella has kept up year after year, week after week, interest me so much. Never a Sunday comes without the old house and garden echoing to the sound of children's pattering feet, and to the voices of aged people, of the middle-aged, and of the youths and maidens too, for at noon-time they come, the country people, whose homes are scattered all the hill-sides over, for a rest between services at Aunt Stella's, who, though they are every one provided with a luncheon of their own, has always ready a cup of tea for the old people, a treat of seed-cakes for the children, a sprig of rosemary or flower-blossom for the "young things," as she calls them, while many and many a farmer's wife carries home, carefully tied in the corner of the best Sunday handkerchief, some treasure of larkspur, pink, or poppy-seed, or some slip of geranium or rare cutting that will make bright the garden-plot, that is a little oasis-place to many a farmer's wife among the New England corn-fields and meadow-lands.

These simple evidences of good-will and interest, Aunt Stella is wont to distribute with her own hands, always linking with them some word of counsel, comfort, or warning—words that live long after the cakes are eaten, the flowers withered, the seed-vessels emptied of their treasures; for among those Sabbath-day comers, many a middle-aged matron, sober farmer, awkward youth, or rosy-cheeked girl, let fall, even in my hearing, some half-uttered thanks, that bore testimony that sayings of Aunt Stella's, on some by-gone Sabbath, had led them to think of Christ the Heavenly Friend.

But I must not attempt to record the many, many deeds of love to Him, that all the while are shining like gems in dear Aunt Stella's life; I can only group them all in my memory, where I am sure they will, all through my coming days, glow with a light that is bright with heart-warmth—the light of love.

XXV.

I SAT down yesterday to record some of the many needs of sympathy in joys and sorrows, and bewilderments, that I have met with since I came to stay with Aunt Stella, more than a month ago now,—and then I wandered off into writing other things, but to-day I will try not to.

Not that I need, from fear of forgetting to write down my experiences, but because they have all come to me, laden with some special influence or fuel-log, for my winter fire,—and, I promised grandpapa, that I would record the events, however simple they might be, that affect my heart's life—or, as dear grandpapa would say, my soul's growth.

Looking up from my writing, I catch a

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glimpse of such a pleasant "influence," I think the memory of it will stay with me as the memory of June sunshine stays with us even in December days.

I am sitting in the porch (the wide, open-hearted, hospitable porch, over which roses, clematis, and honeysuckles climb). Just before me is the broad, flower-bordered walk, that leads up from the garden gate—the gate, on either side of which, seeming like ever-watchful sentinels, two great silver-leaved poplar trees, reach their branches far upward—"Her æolian harps," Aunt Stella calls them, for when the summer breeze is scarce more than a breath of air, they catch it, and among their shining, shimmering leaves, rippling music plays.

But it is not the calm, sweet influence of restful nature, whispering of peace, where there have been storms, that I think will stay by me, so much as the remembrance of dear old Aunt Stella, who is sitting in the porch too, on her low easy-chair, with her little work-table by her side,—the table,—

where her Bible, the old, time-worn Bible, always lies, and unless she places upon the page some little weight, like her spectacles, a knitting-needle, or perchance a flower, it is ever open, either at the "Let not your heart be troubled" chapter, or David's Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

I wonder—is it because so many and many a time in Aunt Stella's life, with trembling hand and needing heart, she has turned the Bible leaves to those places, that now they open to the comfort-words quite naturally?

Certain it is, there are such times of need in some lives.

Are there not in all?

But my fuel-logs, what of them? The first I found only a few days after I arrived here at Aunt Stella's—I went for a walk, all by myself, down by the brook-side, and there I met sweet Bessie Mills (whom I had seen the evening before),—something about the fair young girl reminds me of Meta; though her laughing blue eyes and rosy

cheeks, her wealth of clustering curls, that seemed to have caught their brightness from the sunshine, are not like Meta's, any more than field daisies are like garden roses. And yet they are alike, this little bright-eyed country daisy, Bessie Mills, and Meta, my garden rose. Alike in joyfulness, in youth, in earnestness, and bewilderment too, for as we sat there by the brook-side, with anemones, blue violets, and the fragile little wind-flowers blooming all about us, I had only talked with Bessie for a few minutes, before, half tremulously, she began to ask questions, that were the very counterparts of so many of Meta's queries—those questions that come with the passing out beyond girlhood into something deeper, when faith—childhood's faith to some—seems like a pendulum, swinging back and forth, from unbelief to belief, from heresy to orthodoxy, till at last the restless heart is content to anchor in the safe harbor, whose beacon light, shining over the troubled waves of doubt and fear, glows with the promise,

"What we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

Sometimes it seems to me, when such young lives come and touch my own, the way I can help them most, is just by listening to their troubles—by letting them know I pray for them, and by striving, not by many, but by few words, to let them know too "the dark places over which they are stumbling, are in their own hearts, and not in God's Word."

They were only very commonplace difficulties that perplexed Bessie. Only the "feeling sometimes so wrong in my heart, Miss Gray," as she expressed it. Only the "longing to see Christ, clear of the mist of speculation." Only the failing to remember, that where we love we trust. Only the desire to make self worthy of His love, instead of coming just because of her need of Him. These were her chief troubles—these, and that thorny little shrub, that stretches its prickly branches across so many a pathway, that the young in following after Christ

must tread—the inconsistencies of others—the why those who profess to have renounced the pleasures of this world, live yet, apparently, just the same lives, as they did before their renunciation.

Bible words were almost all by which I could answer Bessie—and how wonderful it is, that there always is a Bible word for every want—for every question. A slight action of the young girl's, as I, one by one, strove to answer her troubles, touched me so. Almost unconsciously, with every reply she reached her pretty white dimpled hand (the little hand that never yet had known aught but caressing touch, so gently life had dealt with the young thing) down among the grass-blades, where the flowers grew, picking now one, and then another, as though she would keep the memory of my replies to her troubles, linked with the memory of spring and early summer-time flowers, for spring had not left the woods that June-time.

It was in thinking of, or rather in saying

out the words, by which I answered Bessie, that I found so much fuel-wood for myself.

For her first expression, the "feeling so wrong in my heart," I just whispered Isaiah's answer to that feeling: "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."—And for her next trouble, the "longing to see Christ, clear of the mist of speculation," I repeated the gospel words recorded in John's chapter, and they sounded—those words—clear as a church-bell on Sabbath morning: "Then spake Jesus unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—Adding, from Corinthians, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, but he that is spiritual."

For her failing to remember that where we love we trust, why, I had but to remind Bessie of the promise, that in all failures, we may be "more than conquerors, through Him that loved us,"—just as I had but to

remind her, when she grieved over her own unworthiness to come to Christ, of the words, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"—and that all the fitness we need to feel, is our need of Him. Her last perplexity, the inconsistencies of others, I think we never can meet that, except by the "Judge not" verse, just as we can only meet the question, "What may I do, and what may I not do, as a professing Christian?" by the double answer, "I walk at liberty, because I keep Thy laws," and the verse, "Use not that liberty, for an occasion of stumbling."

XXVI.

IT seemed so strange, on returning from my talk that day with little Bessie Mills, I found a letter from Meta awaiting me, four pages crossed, some sentences of which seemed almost like an echo of Bessie's words, for it was full of bewilderment, as to what she (Meta) ought and ought not to do, in regard to entering into some of the amusements of her gay young companions, now that she was a professing Christian and Sabbath-school teacher. It was easier for me to reply to Meta than to Bessie, for in Meta's letter, troubling queries were interwoven with glad expressions of her joy, in the dear love of her earthly friend,—so blended, it seemed—the letter—like the sky of an April day, made up of bits of sunshine and bits of

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shade. And, just because of this blending, I had only, in answer, to remind her of the love she had for her human friend, only to ask, would it be a sacrifice, or a hard thing, for her to give up some treasured enjoyment, if by continuing that enjoyment, she caused even the faintest suspicion that her love for him was not all-satisfying—if by it, she incurred even the least risk of casting a shadow, dim and undefined as the shadow of gossamer web, on the whole-heartedness of her love and fealty to her friend, or the honor that belonged to him,—and—then, knowing so well her reply, I just asked, if thus, she could guard and keep free from any breath of suspicion her love and devotion for an earthly friend, could she not as gladly, as entirely, do it for the heavenly?

I felt, as I wrote these words to Meta, I was sending only a very simple reply to her questions, and yet, is it not, though so simple, the truest of all replies, to the oft-vexed questions, "Shall I go here or there?" "Do this or that?"—the questions, that ear-

nest souls, in following Christ, must ask often of pleasures that are all harmless in themselves, but all harm-full, ah! so harm-full, if by continuing in them, some brother or sister of narrower vision, perchance, than our own, is led to question the whole-heartedness of our love and consecration to the Saviour, whom we have professed to regard as the "chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."

I often wonder why so much discussion is mooted on this subject, when it seems so easily answered and tested by laying it by the side of our willingness "to give up" any pleasure for the sake of a human friend; our gladness and satisfaction in going without aught that may interfere with their being loved and honored by others, for every one who has truly loved, knows so well the delight there is in an act of self-renunciation for the loved one. I often wonder, too, why we are so slow in remembering, when it seems unnecessary to us (because we think there is nothing for others

to misjudge) to give up some longed for, but at best, transitory pleasure of gay company or festive scene for Christ's sake, that those who are the most inconsistent in their own deeds, are so wont to be the most watchful and the quickest to see inconsistencies in others, and for their sakes we should be guarded. While I write thus, all the broad liberty of action and thought, that is so wide-reaching and characteristic of this happy time of the world in which I live, is very, very beautiful to me, and yet, surely it is only safe—I mean safe for me, for I cannot judge for others—to keep as much in my mind as I can, the words I read somewhere, "One must not be so broad, as to forget there is but the narrow way to Heaven."

XXVII.

MY next experience or fuel-log, was as unlike the talk with Bessie, as the dull, storm-full day on which it occurred, was unlike the sweet, sunshiny morning, when I sat with the young girl by the brook-side.

It happened toward the close of a long, long rainy day, that followed a week-time of cloudy skies, near the end of June.

The village dressmaker, Miss Linn, had been busy for Aunt Stella since early morning, striving to accomplish that hardest of all "scissor and needle" tasks, the making of an old gown into a new. And, while Aunt Stella was taking her after-dinner nap, I carried my work into the sewing-room, thinking to chat a while with Miss Linn;

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for something in her face touched my heart. Yet it was a plain, a very plain face, with a look now and then almost hard and sharp, an expression that seemed to stray occasionally into her words; for sometimes they sounded hard and sharp too, as though she had clipped off (or they had been clipped off for her) all the bright bits of life and joy that had come near her, as ruthlessly as she clipped off the unnecessary bits of thread and cloth, letting them fall in unheeded scraps at her feet;—scraps that would be gathered up as worthless, except to crowd into some rag-bag, from which they would be tumbled out, to be crushed through this and that process, till they would come forth, no longer rags, but smooth sheets of snowy paper, to be traced with what words? Ah! there's the mystery of it!

Looking at Miss Linn, as she sat taking stitch after stitch, with never a sigh of impatience, though her thread often knotted, often broke, just as it had done every week-day for years and years, I fell into wonder-

ing, Was her life's work, in a mystical way, a counterpart of her soul's experience? Had she ever known bright, beautiful bits in her life?—bits that had been clipped off, and like the shreds of her work (only not so ruthlessly, but bravely), cast under her feet,—bits that some day, after the needed chastening and purifying, would come forth again, white as the stainless paper, to be traced with words,—What words?

I fell into wondering, Do those lines of the poet's—

"Men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,"

unlock a door-way into the secret workings of lives, humble and uneventful as Miss Linn's—lives that earn their "daily bread," the material bread, by the never-ending routine of stitch, stitch?

Miss Linn was old—so old that she needed to rub up and down the glasses of her spectacles, before the thread would find its way into the needle's eye—her hands too,

were beginning to grow tremulous and uncertain.

It just hurt me to see her trying to thread her needle, and as I took it from her hand, I think she must have felt my sympathy, for I never saw so quick a transition from almost hardness to gentleness, as she said:

"Thank you," adding, "My time for work is almost over,—and,—what then?" It makes my eyes fill with tears, even now, to think of all those two little words meant to that desolate woman—mean to many and many a desolate woman, all the broad world over.

But Miss Linn, she did not have to wait for the answer, for only a brief week later all suddenly, after no hours of lingering illness or suffering, she was called to that Home, where no fear-some one need ask, looking forward to a weary stretch of dependent years, "What then?"—for *all* is There!

But to return to that hour, when the old woman's heart warmed toward me, because

of the little expression of sympathy, that led her into telling me of herself and her by gone.

She prefaced the story, as is so specially the manner of New England women, with—"I aint much in the way, Miss Gray, of talking of such things—but you've seen trouble yourself, childie."

And something more than the glitter of the shining needle shone on Miss Linn's work—something that dimmed the spectacle glasses again.

It was a simple story she told me, a commonplace story, all the more pitiful, I think, for its very commonplaceness.

Her home had, all her life long, been in that quiet village, and the little she knew of book-knowledge, was bounded by the spelling, writing, and arithmetic, taught in the old red school-house.

"Where I used to go when I was a child," she said, and she smiled (it was so pleasant to know she remembered thus, with a smile, —that old woman,—the days of childhood); a

smile that deepened as she went on to tell me how, in her early youth, she had stood with a little group of friends (and the smile grew dim as she said, "They are almost all gone now—dropped off, one by one") in the village church, to openly confess her love for the Saviour—the love, that often since she had so needed—so needed.

Then Miss Linn had paused in the story—taking a new, and a long thread, before she began the tale that I listened to, while the rain pattered and beat against the window-pane, as though it were a sad refrain to Miss Linn's history,—the history which stretched back—so far back.

Only faintly did her words outline it for me, and yet I caught through them, the glimmer of a summer day, a day bright and glad as that, which made glad and happy my own heart's summer-time,—caught the glow of a hope as beautiful and bright, as the hope that I had known.

It was a tremulous, tender voice in which she told it,—that aged woman, with the plain

face and ungainly form,—the story of her bygone, a brief story of a time when the years of her life counted but eighteen spring-times—when returning from her day's work (she had even then begun the fitting and the stitching), walking through the meadow path, she had thought the little flowers smiled up at her as she passed—had thought the birds sang a gladder good-night song, than ever she had heard before.

Perhaps they did—who knows?

And,—and—sitting there by my side, stitching all the while, she whispered (that weary, work-worn woman):

“You see, Miss Gray, I never can forget that hour—for—it was then—he told me,”—and,—she did not tell me what he had told,—for—the tears, that had only dimmed the spectacle glasses before, were then blinding the old eyes, choking the old voice.

But I guessed without her telling—guessed it so well, for it is such an oft-told tale, the sweet story which it needs but three little words to tell, just the simple little

words “I love you”—the three little words so quickly said, but so freighted with an echo that never dies, even out of aged hearts.

Every June-time they are whispered over. Why do they never grow old, I wonder?—No,—I do not wonder, for do I not know?—The sequel to Miss Linn's story was briefly told, almost as briefly as the fact was recorded in the county paper of that long-ago date: “Accidentally killed, by a fall from his horse, George, aged twenty-three years, son of Farmer Marsh.”

After that—the flowers had bloomed—birds sang—June-times come again, but they never had seemed the same to Nancy Linn. And then had followed years during which she had gone on making garments, sometimes gay-colored garments, sometimes sombre robes,—and sometimes white, bridal robes.

“And I never could have borne it,” she said to me, “but for the saying over and over to myself, with every sunrise, every sunset, and noon-time, Miss Gray, that verse,

'The Lord loveth whom He chasteneth.' He loves—He loves,—why, sometimes it seems as though them words were sewed in and out of my work, childie, in and out! And she smiled,—smiled—and went on, taking stitch after stitch.

It was thus she gave me—that village dressmaker—fuel-logs,—such bright, burning fuel-logs for my heart's fire.

XXVIII.

I WONDER why, once again, here in this old house, I should have listened to the story of a life, told by one whose years number the "three-score and ten." Why, in my hour of care-free girlhood, I should have hearkened to Aunt Stella's tale, and now, in this afterward-time, to another story so like to hers. But I must not begin to wonder over the why, I must just strive to live out the lessons of these life-stories,—the lessons that are all summed up in the *really* feeling the truth of the words, "Your Heavenly Father knoweth ye hath need of these things." It is such a tender, wondrously tender word—that *knoweth*, coming as it does after the Father, which shows us "God is Love." Surely, it ought to hold consola-

tion enough for all dark hours, just as it holds security for all glad; but, sometimes, —I so forget it.

And now, the pages of my little book are filling up so fast, I must leave unrecorded some of the dear experiences that have been so sweet to me, while here in the country; and yet I would fain tell of Benny, the lame boy, of old Mrs. Barber, and oh! so many others, who have given me fuel-wood, these days of tarrying among the New England hills; just as I want to tell of many and many a dear talk with Aunt Stella—talks which she has strewn with comfort and help-thoughts, almost as thickly, it seems to me, as stars are strewn the blue sky over;—yet, and I suppose it is one reason why they help me so much, I have sometimes to search for the comforts, for Aunt Stella is wont to conceal her deepest meanings, something as forest trees, by gnarled and lichen moss-grown bark, conceal the beauties of the wood, that, when polished, reveal delicate lines of shading, bright lines over-

lapping dark lines, as bright truths overlap, when I seek for them, the places in Aunt Stella's talks, that seem dim to me. But —.

XXIX.

IT is long since I last wrote in this little book—I left it with a sentence only just begun—so long, the last page I traced bears the impress of July upon it, and now December is here. How can I span it over, this long, silent time? Indeed I know not, except by silence; and since then, there has been in my life one of those still times that come now and then, seeming like the season of calm weather that comes in midsummer, or like the rest in a strain of music, that serves to bridge over some sudden change, from soft treble to clanging bass note. I wonder why it has come, this quiet, peaceful time? I wonder what it will lead me to?

God knows! and there I try to leave it. It was August before I returned home. I

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was so glad to come,—glad as one always is to come home.

Will my heart thrill with something of the same gladness, when the call to the abiding Home comes?

I could not help feeling sadly at parting from Aunt Stella, the old servants, little Bessie Mills, and the many kind people I had learned to know; and at first, I missed the fresh, sweet country air, the stillness, the flowers, and the broad, open stretch of sky too. But home, and that means being with grandpapa and papa,—oh! it was, and it is so precious to me, and they were, and are as happy as I, at having me again. Since then, my days, they have come and gone, so peacefully, so tranquilly, like a crystal sea, unbroken by rippling wave, these last months of my life seem to me. And now it has brought me, this swift-going time, almost to the end of my diary, almost next to the last page in the record, that so faintly, as I look it over, tells the real story of my heart's experience, during the years

since I kept that other diary,—so faintly hints at the full Light and Comfort, the full Peace and Rest, with which Christ has stilled the storms that have come to me.

For, how can I tell by words what it means, to hear, when storms are surging through the heart, the whisper—Christ's whisper, "Peace, be still."

I think one cannot tell it, can only feel it. But, if I had lived all the time in the Light of His Presence, would not the Light shine out more from these pages? and from my life?

XXX

IT is Christmas Eve, and I have come to the end of my diary-book, just as I came to the last page of that first diary (that grandpapa calls my "Summer Drift-wood"), on a Christmas Eve night, so long ago.

The bells are ringing out all the city over, as they did then, peals of Christmas gladness and good-will. I wonder, do they ever ring as loud, the Christmas bells, as ring the memory chimes they wake up in human hearts?

I did not think to write another word on this last leaf; I just meant to leave it pure and white, unbroken by a line. But while I was sitting with grandpapa, just before the lights were lit, he asked, as I nestled my hand into his: "Well, Annie, child, are you ready to give me to-morrow, the diary that I call your "Winter Fire?"

And, when I told him yes, I could not keep the tears that filled my eyes from falling on the hand that held my own, because, it came over me so,—how empty my record is,—so empty of the fuel-wood, that has many and many a time been within my grasp,—and yet—I have let it slip by. And then, dear grandpapa, he said, “God bless you, child,” holding my hand close in his, while he repeated the lines:

“Be sure,—no earnest work
Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much:
It is not gather’d as a grain of sand,
To enlarge the sum of human action used
For carrying out God’s end.”

After that,—we were silent for a little while.

Then softly I whispered: “May I take them for seal-words, grandpapa dear, for my diary that ends to-night?”

Grandpapa did not answer, except by a smile. So I take them for seal and motto-words too, for they glow so with heart-

cheer for the by-gone and the coming, seeming, like Yule-time logs, to cast a brightness over all the year. And yet, they are lit, the Yule-logs, ’mid dreary winter days of frost and cold. But, do they burn any the less bright for that? and did they not ripen in spring and summer days, the Yule logs? Just as the truths that Christ sent into my heart, amid my glad spring and summer days, give forth clear light in this afterward-time, as I lay them, sometimes ’mid heart-dreariness and cold, on that altar-place, where burns my WINTER FIRE.

THE END.

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