

THE GUIDING ANGEL.

THE
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BY
KATE MURRAY.



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PREFACE.

No literary merit is claimed for the following work, but it has been written for the young, and it is hoped it may be used by them with pleasure and with profit. Whether or not it will fail of its desired end is known only to Him who hath said, "My word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that whereunto I have sent it."

If by its perusal the path of religion is rendered more attractive to one youthful traveller, or one young heart be cheered in its onward journey, it will not have been written in vain.

THE AUTHOR.

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CHAPTER I.

TOMMY AND HIS DOG.

IT was a bright summer morning, the sunbeams were glittering on the dewdrops which hung on every blade of grass, when little Tommy Vincent, with his dog Button at his heels, sallied out of the miserable hovel he called home, for a frolic in the fresh air. Tommy threw up his shaggy, uncombed head, sniffed the sweet, blossom-laden breeze, and seemed suddenly to awaken to an appreciation of the beauties by which he was surrounded.

“My! Button, ain’t this splendid?” he said, clapping his hands and addressing the

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little squatty quadruped by his side, which looked up in his face with as much sagacity as if he understood his master's remark, and perfectly agreed with him.

"Let's have a race!" Tommy continued, "down to that maple. One, two, three, and away," and off they sped, Tommy reaching the goal first, and plunging head foremost on the dewy grass, watched fat Button waddling along with all the speed he could muster. When at last he did get to the tree Tommy greeted him with as much applause as if he had performed a very praiseworthy feat, and then they rolled over one another and tumbled about the green sward, Tommy's uproarious laughter mingling with the short shrill bark of Button, until both were fain to lie still from sheer exhaustion. When they had rested a little while Tommy started up, saying,

"Now, Button, jump, like a good fellow!" and the little cur sprang into the air, higher

than Tommy's head, coming down to the ground so firmly that it made him grunt.

This amusement continued until a voice behind them startled both by saying,

"That's a pretty smart dog you have there!"

Tommy turned to take a look at the intruder, and saw a youth well-dressed and handsome; apparently about eighteen years of age. He held in his hand a short thick fragment of tough wood, which he had been whittling as he walked along.

"I guess he is," said Tommy, better pleased with his remark than if it had been applied to himself. "He's nigh onto about the smartest dog round these parts."

"How much will you take for him?"

"I couldn't think of sellin' him nohow," said Tommy, for Button was the pride and darling of his heart.

"Will you take a dollar for him?"

"No! I won't sell him!"

"I'll give you two dollars for him," said the young gentleman, taking out his purse and holding a gold piece temptingly before the eyes of the little ragged urchin.

Tommy looked at the money wistfully, then at his little four-footed friend, who was wagging his tail and looking up in his master's face, as if begging him to refuse the tempting offer. His affection overcame his love of gain, and shaking his head in a very decided manner, he whistled to Button and was walking off, when the young gentleman, who was not accustomed to have his designs thwarted, and was particularly exasperated at being denied a request by one of the poorest lads in the neighbourhood, gave a low call to Button. The unsuspecting little animal came trotting back, and the youth, with a vicious expression which disfigured his handsome face, proceeded to fasten on the tail of the poor dog the piece of stick, in which he had made a slit. No

sooner had he let go, than the wood, cleaving together with all the tenacity for which oak is remarkable, pinched him in a very sensitive manner. He ran around after his tail trying to free it, yelping, howling, and barking, when Tommy hearing the row flew to his rescue.

"Take that off of his tail, I say!" he shouted, in a voice of distress; but the young gentleman, highly delighted at Button's ineffectual attempts, would not free the dog himself nor let Tommy.

"See," he said, provokingly, "how smart it makes him. Look how he jumps up and down. He is learning to waltz. That's a better way to teach them to dance than putting them on hot iron."

Tommy could stand it no longer. In vain he had kicked, cried, and fought, and now, seizing the arm of his tormentor in his teeth, he bit him so savagely that he let him go with a cry of pain.

The young man's face grew livid with passion, and springing forward he caught the dog before Tommy, saying, hoarsely,

"I'll pay you and your precious cur both, for that!"

He put the dog's head under his arm to stifle its cries, and then taking a stout piece of cord out of his pocket deliberately formed it into a noose, and proceeded to put it around his neck.

Tommy stood by watching his operations with a trembling heart for the safety of his dog.

"What are you goin' to do with him?" he asked, in a trembling voice.

"I'm going to show you that brats like you can't insult a gentleman with impunity. I'll just give Master Button a swing in the fresh air this morning for the good of his health."

"You ain't a goin' to hang him, be you?" Tommy questioned with a blanching face.

"We shall see," the other replied, with cruel composure, and having completed everything to his satisfaction, he proceeded to hang the squirming animal to one of the lower limbs of the trees, but high up out of Tommy's reach.

"Oh ! don't hang him, Mr. Donald, please don't hang him, and I'll give him to you if you won't kill him. I will ! Do take Button down, and I won't never be sassy to you agin !"

The child made this appeal in piteous accents, with clasped hands, and tears running over his sun-burnt cheeks, but it made no impression on the feelings of his tormentor who watched Button's struggles with indifference, and took a fiendish delight in drawing Tommy's attention to them.

"Look how he kicks," he would say, "he dies hard. I wonder which hurts worst, the stick on his tail or the cord round his neck."

Tommy made no reply to his heartless remarks, and in a few minutes the dog ceased to move. When assured that it was quite dead, Donald cut it down and let it fall heavily to the ground. Its eyes starting wildly from its head were already glazing, but there was something in its appearance, with the piece of wood still fastened to its tail and its stiff legs sprawling upwards so gratifying to his sense of the ridiculous, that he burst into a loud laugh. Tommy, who had watched him in indignant silence, but with an agonized expression of countenance, now removed the stick and string, and gathering his dead pet to his bosom burst into a passion of tears.

"Oh ! Button ! poor little fellow," he cried, kissing it and caressing it, weeping all the while as if his heart would break.

The young gentleman in nowise abashed by the sight of all the distress he had occasioned, called out—

"Be sure and inter those precious remains with due solemnity," and then sauntered off whistling carelessly.

His steps were suddenly arrested by the sight of a young girl approaching from an opposite direction. He seemed anxious to avoid meeting her, but she saw him, and calling out,

"Oh, Donald! is that you at last?" hurried towards him.

The young gentleman stopped, saying in a tone of surprise,

"Why, Bertha, what brings you here so early?"

"Papa says you may saddle the ponies and come with me for a ride this morning; and I was in such a hurry to get away that I could not wait for you to return. I started off on a journey of discovery, and you see what success has crowned my efforts."

"I am afraid your zeal has an unworthy object," Donald replied; and the expression

with which he regarded the pretty flushed face before him was very different from that with which he watched the dying struggles of poor Button a few moments before. He was going to lead his cousin away from the place which had grown distasteful to him, when she noticed for the first time Tommy, who still sat in an attitude of dejection, with the dead dog clasped to his breast.

This was just what Donald wished to avert, for he well knew what his cousin's opinion of his conduct would be. Every one loved Bertha Eswald. At school she was universally known by the name of "Bertha the good;" and Donald Wilson would rather have fallen in the estimation of every friend he possessed, than to merit the censure of his cousin Bertha.

"What ails that little boy?" Bertha asked; "he seems to be in great distress."

Donald muttered something about "a whimpering brat," and would have gone on,

but his cousin crossed over to the place where Tommy was.

"Surely, Bertha! you will not demean yourself by talking to every squalling child in the parish. If you do you'll have your hands full." Donald called these words after her in a tone of extreme vexation, and Bertha pausing an instant said, in a tone of mild reproach,

"He is a child of the same Father as you and I, Donald, and as such must claim the attention of a sister from me."

Tommy looked up in surprise at the sound of Bertha's kind voice, and his wonder increased when he saw the sweet young face that bent over him. His grievance was too great to be conciliated by a few kind words, and in his simplicity he looked on all the fortunate of the earth as in league against him. He was not disposed to regard Bertha with favour after what her cousin had done, and he answered sulkily,

"'Taint nothin' to you, as I knows of."

"But," said Bertha, her good intentions undamped by his rudeness, "perhaps if you would tell me what ails you I could do something for you."

"You can't do nothin' without you bring Button back to life," said Tommy, opening his arms and revealing the ghastly little corpse, while his tears broke out afresh.

"O what made your dog die?" Bertha exclaimed, in a voice of mingled pity and horror.

"It didn't die!" said Tommy bluntly, "that fellow killed it!"

"Surely, Donald never could be so cruel! How did he happen to do it?"

"He didn't happen nothin' about it! He just wanted to buy Button of me, and when I wouldn't sell him he put a stick on his tail, and when I went to take it off he wouldn't let me, and I bit him; and then he hung Button for spite;" and Tommy con-

cluded this lucid explanation by again kissing and hugging the dog, while he sobbed violently.

Tears of pity and distress filled the soft brown eyes of Bertha Eswald as she listened to this account of her cousin's cruelty.

"Poor little boy!" she said kindly, laying her delicate hand on the rough head of the boy, "I'm so sorry for you. If you'll come to my home this afternoon I'll give you another dog, with white curly hair and pretty black eyes."

"It wouldn't be Button," said Tommy, looking at his spotted black-nosed pet, "so I don't care for him."

"Well, then," Bertha persisted, "if you won't come to see me I must go and see you. Will you tell me where you live?"

"Over in that black house yonder," Tommy answered, indicating the place by a nod of his head; "but I don't see what fine

grand ladies like you wants to come to poor folks like us for."

"Don't you?" Bertha answered. "Well you'll see when I get there. I'll come this evening and you must be sure to be at home."

"I will, Miss," Tommy said, softened in spite of himself by her kindness, and gathering up his mournful burden he slowly proceeded towards home.

Meanwhile Donald, who was an unwilling spectator of this scene, waited impatiently for Bertha to join him.

"Really, cousin, you must have found the young savage very entertaining to stay so long with him. Hurry along, now you have come, for the sun will be very hot before we get back from our ride."

"I don't want to go for a ride, now."

"Why not?"

"Donald! how could you be so cruel and wicked as to kill the poor child's dog?"

"Cruel and wicked, Bertha?" Donald repeated, flushing with shame and anger, "You use very strong language."

"Not stronger than the occasion warrants. It was cruel to deprive the child of his dog, and wicked to take the life of any harmless animal needlessly," and Bertha leaned against the fence and actually wept.

Donald really loved his cousin, and the sight of her tears grieved and annoyed him, especially when he knew himself to be the cause. He took her hand in his and said gently,

"Bertha, you are judging me very harshly, but I had more provocation than you think for. Look here!" he bared his arm, and showed the blue mark in his flesh which Tommy's teeth had left.

"You provoked the child beyond endurance or he would not have done so," Bertha answered, without evincing much compassion for his suffering.

"Well, I own I was rather vengeful, but after all it was only a pup. What is the use of talking about it!"

"It is not the mere killing of the dog which grieves me," said Bertha, as they walked home, "but it is the effect on the heart of the child. His love for the little animal was one redeeming feature in his character, and one bright spot in his life. You have destroyed that, and hardened his feelings not only towards yourself but every one else. He has nothing to love or care for now, and the bad in his surroundings will have a double influence over him."

"Really, Bertha, you make a great talk about a small matter. If that is all I can soon get him another dog."

"But that is not all, Donald. If some one was to come and take you away from your parents and all you love, do you think it would compensate for their loss to have

other persons, whom you had neither seen nor known, sent to occupy our place ?”

“No, certainly not.”

“Neither would Tommy be willing to accept another dog in lieu of the one you have hung.”

“You’re a strange girl, Bertha,” said Donald, in a tone half-vexed, half-sad. “I’m sure I had no idea there would be such a fuss made over the ugly cur, or I would have been very sorry to touch it. No one but yourself would have thought about it twice.”

They had reached home by this time, and were standing in the wide hall. Bertha suddenly remembered that her zeal for Tommy’s cause might have made her regardless of her cousin’s feelings. She turned to him with tears in her eyes, and holding out her hand said, meekly,

“Donald, I’m afraid I spoke very unkindly to you just now. Will you forgive me for it ?”

Something like a tear twinkled in Donald's proud eye as he took the proffered hand, but he tried to answer carelessly :

"Bless you ! after all it's only little Bertha, a privileged person from whom we all take all sorts of lectures, and love her none the less for them."

"And do your own way none the less, either," said Bertha, smiling.

"I don't know that. Time may bring a greater reward of your labours than you now imagine," and Donald kissed his cousin, and ran up stairs.



CHAPTER II.

THE VISIT TO THE COTTAGE.

ACCORDING to Bertha's promise, she went that evening to Tommy Vincent's home. She rapped at the open door, but receiving no invitation to enter, ventured in. The room contained no living occupant and but little furniture; that little being of the most wretched description. The window was stuffed with old rags, excluding both light and air. A heap of straw in the corner, with some old rags for covering, answered for a bed; a rickety table, with some broken dishes and fragments of brown bread shewed what kind of food the inhabitants were accustomed to. Two or three benches and an old stove constituted all the valuables which the house contained.

Bertha stood for a moment, contemplating the scene of filth and misery, so different from her own luxurious home, when a slight noise at the back of the house drew her attention. She made her way around to a small plot of ground that had been enclosed as a garden, but was long since given over to the rule of weeds and thistles, except in two or three places which Tommy had been tempted to keep clean in consideration of a few holly-hocks and marigolds which had the hardihood to try to grow. In one of these cleared spots he had dug a grave and there interred the remains of poor Button. Every blossom had been gathered from the flower-roots to decorate the little mound, and now Tommy lay stretched on the ground beside it in all the abandonment of grief.

Bertha knelt down beside him and touched him with her hand. He raised his head, shewing his eyes red and swollen, his face disfigured with tears and dirt.

"What do you want?" he asked gruffly.

"I wanted to tell you how sorry I am for you."

The kind face and gentle voice of the girl doubtless made some impression on the lonely heart of the child, but more than all was he attracted by the two tears which filled her soft eyes and rolled over her cheeks for his distress.

"I don't know what makes you sorry for me," Tommy answered, still sullenly, but softened in spite of himself by her manner.

"Because I like you, Tommy," Bertha answered simply.

The child looked at her somewhat incredulously, but reading truth in her countenance, he replied,

"That's queer, anyhow! No one ever cared for me since marm died. Dad does'nt; nobody does."

"O you poor forsaken child!" Bertha exclaimed, in a burst of real compassion.

"There is some one who loves you dearly, truly; more than I do, more than your mother ever did!"

"Who is it?" Tommy asked, sitting up and looking at Bertha in amazement.

"It is Jesus," Bertha answered solemnly.

"Jesus? I never saw him! I don't know him!"

"But He knows you, and loves you; and more than that, He died for you."

"Died for me! When? How do you know?" Tommy asked, with eyes wide open in surprise.

"The Bible tells us so."

"What is the Bible?"

"A good book that tells us all about Jesus and the beautiful home he has prepared for us. Can you read, Tommy?"

"No, not much."

"If I get you a Bible will you learn to read it?"

"I have no one to tell me how."

"If you'll come to my home every day for an hour I will give you a lesson. You know where I live?"

"Yes; you're 'Squire Eswald's daughter, that lives in that grand white house over there."

"Yes; that's where I live. Will you come?"

"No! I can't go there."

"Why not, Tommy?"

"'Cause they're all so grand there," and he looked down at his dirty, tattered garments.

"But if you will come I will get you a suit of new and clean clothes."

"Don't that young gentleman that killed Button live there?" Tommy asked, doubtfully.

"Yes; but you won't need to see him. You can come to my room where there will be no one but myself. Will you do that?"

"Well, mebbe so."

"And, Tommy, I want you to come to church and to Sunday School next Sunday."

"Oh! no, Miss. I couldn't do that nohow."

"What harm would it do you?"

"That's where all the grand folks goes; and ladies like you with fine dresses and them shiny yaller things on their necks, would'nt want me there."

"If you wash your face and hands I will have a suit of clothes made for you; you will then be neat and clean, and every one will be pleased to see you," said Bertha.

After a good deal of persuasion, Bertha extracted a promise from him that he would come to school on Sunday morning, provided "dad" was out of the way.

"Are you fond of flowers, Tommy?" she asked, as she was about leaving.

"Yes," he answered, "only I haven't many," and he looked ruefully at the stalks

he had stripped to decorate poor Button's grave.

"Would you like a pretty white rose to plant on Button's grave? One that has roots to it. These flowers will all fade in a day or two."

"I guess I would!" said Tommy, with dancing eyes.

"Come over to-morrow evening and I will give you one. Your clothes will be ready for you, too. Be sure and don't forget."

"I won't, Miss," Tommy answered quite gently, and he even deigned to smooth the way of egress for his new friend.

Bertha found her cousin impatiently promenading the veranda, annoyed at her long absence.

"Where have you been so long, Bertha?" was his first question.

"I have been down to Tommy Vincent's cottage," she answered.

Donald would have turned away, dreading some allusion to the affair of the dog, but Bertha detained him.

"You would be astonished, Donald, that any one who had lived in a Christian country for seven or eight years could be as ignorant of everything in the way of religion as that poor child. His mind seems to be in the very blackness of darkness. He had never even heard of a Saviour."

"Plenty of scope there for your benevolent projects, cousin," Donald answered, in a bantering tone. "This is a new, unsoiled volume of nature, and you will have the credit of making the first impression. But, Bertha, why do you persist in going to these dirty, wretched hovels. I would be ashamed to have some of our acquaintances find you there."

"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own

glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

Bertha quoted these words slowly and impressively, then clasping her hands in a kind of rapture she went on—

"Oh! Donald, what is all the honour and glory of this world in comparison to the happiness which will be ours in the next if we are only the means of leading one wandering spirit to its Father's house. And if we neglect our opportunities of doing good how will we answer for our negligence before the bar of God? Will not their blood cling to our skirts, and the wail of those lost spirits, rising out of the depths of eternal misery, ring in our ears for ever and ever?"

The light of the full moon flooded the face of the speaker, shewing it pale with emotion, while her deep and serious eyes sparkled with unwonted lustre from the tears which filled them.

"Bertha!" said Donald, in a voice almost

of terror, and catching her arm as he spoke, "I cannot bear to hear you talk thus! you frighten me."

"Why should it frighten you, Donald, to hear me speak of these things? You, as well as I, know how necessary they are."

"Yes, to old people and those about to die; but to those in the prime of youth and health, like you and me, Bertha, it seems as though there was time enough."

"Remember, Donald, we are not assured that our lives will be one day longer than they now are. The past is gone, the present is going, and we may never see the future."

"You speak as though you did not expect to live long, Bertha."

"I do not think my life will be very long, Donald; and if we should part and never meet again, how terrible it would be!"

"Oh! Bertha!" said the young man, in a voice choked by emotion, "If I could always be with you, you might be my guid-

ing angel to better things. There is a beauty and holiness in religion as exemplified in your good life, which I never knew before."

"It is only the life of the meek and lowly Jesus, which can truthfully be called good. Take Him for your model, and you will find that my righteousness is but as filthy rags in comparison."

"But, cousin, if you be not good, who can be? Were I like you I would be satisfied."

"It is only in heaven, where we will awake in the likeness of His image, that we will be satisfied."

Both the cousins were silent for a while, then Bertha slipped her hand into Donald's, and said coaxingly,

"I want you to promise me one thing, before you go away."

"What is it, Bertha?"

"It is that you will be a Christian. Will you, Donald?"

"Bertha," said Donald very gravely, "of all the friends I know, I would rather deny any of them a request than you. Whenever I make a promise it is with the intention of keeping it, and this one I could not keep."

"You have not tried yet."

"What would be the use of trying when I should be sure to fail? If I was near you all the time, with you to incite me to better purposes by your sweet example, I might be a Christian; but I am going to college again, and you have no idea how difficult it is to lead anything like a moral life there."

"Then it is just there where you are not able to keep yourself, that you have most need of a protector. Promise me that you will at least read a chapter every day for my sake, if not for your own."

"For your sake, Bertha, I would do anything; and I promise."

Donald turned away; but he had only

got as far as the hall door when he came back to Bertha, who was still leaning against a pillar of the veranda. Standing beside her, he whispered—

“Pray for me, cousin; for I have need of your influence with Heaven.”

“I do pray for you always, Donald,” she answered; and when he had again left her, she bowed her head in thankfulness to God for the ascendancy he had given her over the mind of her haughty cousin.

Not to every one would Donald Wilson have revealed his feelings as plainly as he had done to his cousin Bertha on that evening. It was much to win from him the promise she had already done, and she dare not draw the cords of affection too tightly by urging her suit still further, lest they should snap in her hand.

She arose with the sun next morning, and as soon as she was dressed, went to hunt up the housekeeper to confer with her on the

all-important subject of Tommy's clothes. From some of those mysterious stores possessed by old housekeepers, a suit of clothes was found in a very tolerable state of preservation. By dint of cutting down and taking in, a suit for Tommy was eked out; and thanks to Bertha's industry, and that of every one else who could be pressed into the service, they were in readiness early in the afternoon.

It was late before Tommy made his appearance, so late that even the sanguine Bertha despaired of his coming. At last she espied him slowly advancing through the lawn, halting at every step as if doubtful to come on or return. He seemed somewhat re-assured at sight of his friend, and she led him into the kitchen and placed a bowl of milk with a generous slice of bread and butter before him.

Bertha stood by enjoying the zest with which he despatched these, to him, rare

luxuries, and when he had finished, she took him to the garden and directed the gardener to dig up a white rose for Tommy.

"It's little use, Miss, digging it up, for it'll only die, the season's so late," said that functionary, who disliked to disturb his plants.

"Take plenty of earth with the roots and we'll try," said Bertha gently; and she selected some other plants that were more hardy, and gave them to Tommy, with directions for planting and tending them.

"Remember you must take great care of your garden, and I will come and see it sometimes. And be sure and come to the Sabbath-school to-morrow morning at nine o'clock," said Bertha, as he was leaving.

"I will, Miss," said Tommy, trudging away with his bundle of clothes under his arm, and his flower-roots in his hand.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

THE Sabbath scholars were all in their seats, the opening hymn had been sung, and the duties of the day were about to commence. Bertha Eswald was busy with a class of outlaws whom no one else would venture to do anything with. Under her gentle ministration they had already lost something of the half-savage nature which characterized them, and were beginning to learn the way which leadeth to life everlasting. She had waited until after the usual hour, hoping that Tommy Vincent would appear, and at last reluctantly gave out the chapter to be read, when his shaggy head was seen coming up the aisle. He wore the new clothes, in which he was much

less at home than in the old ones, and his dark face shone like a glass bottle from repeated applications of soap and water.

Bertha hastened to show him into a seat, and provided him with a book, but for the latter he had little use, and after fumbling among the leaves for a few seconds was content to lay it down, while he greeted the unwonted sight about him with a lengthy stare. By and by his attention began to be arrested by the lesson of the day. It was the chapter describing the last agonizing scene on the Cross, when the words "It is finished!" proclaimed that the ransom was paid, and the redemption of fallen man accomplished. It was the old, old story; old, yet ever new, which was breathed out on the holy stillness of that Sabbath morning; and then in words, simple in their childlike earnestness—eloquent in their heavenly sweetness, Bertha Eswald spoke of that mighty love which

prompted the sacrifice of the innocent, to save a sinful and polluted world.

More than one sob arose from her little hearers while they listened, and even the hard black eyes of Tommy Vincent glittered with pitying drops as he heard for the first time this "sweet story of old."

"Did he die though, Miss Bertha?" Tommy asked eagerly, his curiosity getting the better of his bashfulness.

"Yes, Tommy, he died for you and for me."

"But what did he die for us for? He didn't know us."

"He died that 'whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Whether they lived when he was on this earth or a thousand years after, it was all the same. He knew that we would all need his pardon, so our salvation was worked out for us long before we were born."

"How did Jesus know this, Miss Bertha?"

"He knows everything. He knows the very thoughts we think, though we never may utter them, even in a whisper. He sees everything we do, though it were in the deepest, darkest spot in all the world."

"Does God know when we are bad?" asked one of the other pupils.

"Yes, he sees every bad deed we do and writes it down against us. We ought to be very careful not to do anything to vex so kind a Father or to grieve so good a friend."

"You never did anything bad, Miss Bertha," said one pale-faced little girl. "You never told a lie."

"Yes, Jennie, when I was a little girl like you I told my dear mother a lie, and now that she is dead I often remember it with regret."

Perhaps this candid confession did more to gain the hearts of her little scholars than any appeal of studied eloquence. It shewed them that their teacher was a mortal, fallible

like themselves, not a being unattainable because of her superior goodness.

"It is not much we can do for Jesus, but don't you all think we ought to do what we can when he has done so much for us?" Bertha asked.

"Yes! oh yes!" most of them replied, but Tommy asked—

"Must we never tell a lie, Miss Bertha, nor steal, nor say bad words?"

"No, Tommy, for all these things are sinful, and Jesus cannot love sin. If we want to go to Heaven, where he lives, we must be very good, for there can in nowise enter into the Holy City anything evil 'neither that which loveth and maketh a lie.'"

"What kind of a place is Heaven?" some one asked.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the things which God

hath prepared for them that love him,'” Bertha replied. “We are told that the foundation of the city is of precious stones, and the streets thereof of pure gold; that it hath no need of the sun or the moon, but the Lord God in the midst of it is the light thereof. That there the redeemed are clothed in robes of white with crowns of gold on their heads and golden harps in their hands, on which they eternally praise the Lamb. But more than all this is the full and abiding sense of our Saviour’s love, and over all and through all will be felt the smiles of a reconciled Father.”

“When will we go there?” Tommy asked.

“Whenever it shall please our Heavenly Father to take us. It may be very soon that some of us will be called.”

“And will we never be sick or hungry there?”

“No,” Bertha answered, “‘they will

neither hunger nor thirst any more, nor suffer any more pain. And God, their own God, will wipe away all tears from all eyes.'"

"Are you sure everybody can go there, Miss Bertha?" Tommy asked, anxiously.

"Yes, the Bible says the invitation is to all. 'Let him that heareth, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely.'"

"And may poor folks like us go, and live there?" Tommy again inquired.

"Yes, if you are only good."

"But it's so hard to be always good!"

"Jesus knows it is hard, and he has promised to help you."

"But maybe he don't want me; I've been so bad."

"'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' And he says to little children, little boys like you, Tommy, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them

not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' If you are really sorry for all the wicked things you have done and pray to Jesus, he will forgive you and take you to Heaven when you die."

"But I don't know how to pray, and I'm afraid he wouldn't hear me."

"Tommy, if you had done anything to vex me, and came and told me you were very sorry, and would try not to do so again, do you think I would be angry with you any longer?"

"No, because you're so good."

"Then Jesus would forgive you all the same, only more freely, because he loves you more, and is better than I am."

Tommy looked at his young instructor as if he almost doubted her assertion, but he whispered softly,

"I'll try, Miss Bertha."

"Do!" Bertha answered, "and he will be

sure to hear you ;” and the school closed for the day.

Tommy walked slowly home pondering all the way on the mighty truths which he had that day heard for the first time. In his poor benighted heart he already began to feel a longing to be better springing up, and a wish that he might go and dwell in this wonderful city which Bertha Esward had told him of. Then he remembered his father, and thought how nice it would be if they could only go together. Perhaps he knew something of the way, and could help him along in that path to which Tommy was a stranger as yet. No one would have inferred from the daily life of David Vincent that he possessed any acquaintance with sacred subjects, but Tommy determined to try.

Full of his new project he rushed into the cottage, crying out,

“Daddy, daddy, won’t you come too?”

There was a rustling in the nest of straw, and a bloated face was turned towards Tommy, out of which a pair of bleared eyes stared stupidly.

"Come where?" asked a gruff voice.

"Come to that nice place Miss Bertha tells about. And she says poor folks like us can go, and will never be sick or hungry any more. Won't you come, daddy?"

"I'll come to you with a stick, and give you a good beating if you don't get out of that with your nonsense, and not be waking me up," the father grunted.

Poor Tommy crept out of the house as quietly as possible, concluding that his father was in no fit state for a work of grace. He went around to the grave where Button was buried, and seeing the rose he had planted there was beginning to wither, he brought some water in an old pan and poured over it. Then he set to work to pull up the weeds that were thriving in the

little patch, and continued this employment until the bell rung for the afternoon service. He had promised Bertha he would attend, and after seeing that his father was too deep in the sleep of inebriety to offer any opposition to his plans, he washed himself and hurried away. Perhaps among all the congregation there was not one who drank in the words of the minister with more intense eagerness than Tommy Vincent. With eyes fixed on the speaker he scarcely moved until the close of the service, and when he left the church it was with a sincere desire to be benefitted.

"I'll be better to dad," he said to himself; and that night, for the first time in his life, he knelt beside his couch of straw, and breathed a prayer before he lay down to rest. Rude and imperfect was the language in which it was couched, but, doubtless, it ascended to the ears of the Omniscent

Father with as much power as if uttered in the most studied eloquence.

Tommy rose early next morning in order to put his good resolves in force, and set to work to prepare their frugal breakfast. It was a difficult matter to give an inviting appearance to the shabby old table and broken dishes, but Tommy had determined to do his best, and he was not going to be daunted by the gloomy prospect before him. He brushed off the crumbs, and then tried to arrange the fragments of bread and what dishes there were in some sort of order.

"It doesn't look so bad now," he thought. "If I only had something else to put on. I wonder if I could get some onions."

Away he hied to the garden, and succeeded in unearthing a few shrivelled specimens, which he peeled and added to the feast. Water was the only beverage they partook of, so a jug of this was placed on the table, and Tommy contemplated the

result of his labours with great satisfaction. "Won't dad be 'sprised when he sees it?" he said, clapping his hands in glee; and truly "dad" was astonished.

"Why, Tommy, who done all this?" he asked, when he came to the table. "It looks real nice."

"I done it all myself, daddy," said Tommy, delighted at this unlooked-for praise.

"What made you?"

"'Cause I thought it might please you, and the minister said we ought to be kind to one another."

"What minister? Where did you see him?"

"At church. Miss Bertha told me to go, and she give me these clothes."

"Did she? Why they're real grand! What did she give them to you for?"

"'Cause she wanted me to go to church, and I said my clothes wasn't good enough, so she give me these. And, oh! daddy, it's

so nice," said Tommy earnestly, for finding his father in such a genial mood he again dared to venture on forbidden ground.

"If you'd only come and hear Miss Bertha tell about that nice home that Jesus lives in you'd want to go there too. She says every one can go if they'll only be good, and I mean to try. Won't you come too, daddy?"

The heart of David Vincent was not all bad, and he turned away his head to conceal the tear which this earnest appeal called forth. His voice was husky as he answered, "What is the use of a wicked wretch like me wanting to go to Heaven, Tommy? The Bible says none but the just shall enter there, and I'm not one of them."

"Then you do know about Heaven and the Bible, father?" Tommy questioned in surprise.

"To be sure I do, child. If I have lived like a heathen and brought you up like one,

t'isn't because I don't know better. It's no use now, though, trying to mend my ways. I'm too old for that."

"But, daddy, Miss Bertha says no matter how bad you've been if you're only sorry, and ask Jesus he'll forgive you."

"Did she say that! Ah, yes! I remember, 'there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' That is in the Bible, Tommy."

"Miss Bertha says she'll teach me to read the Bible if I'll go there every day. Will you let me?"

"Yes, child! go and learn to be a Christian. If I do perish forever, no need of dragging you down to hell with me."

"But won't you come to church with me, and we'll learn the way to Heaven together. Do come with me, daddy, I don't want to go alone. Won't you come?"

David Vincent shook off his child's hand

and turned away from the little pleading face, not unkindly, but as if he feared being betrayed into some momentary weakness of which he might afterwards repent.

“Don’t bother me now. I’ll see about it,” he said, and hurried away to his work, and with this concession Tommy was obliged to be content.



CHAPTER IV.

GROWING IN GRACE.

ON Monday afternoon Tommy duly presented himself before Bertha for his lesson in reading. He paid great attention to her instructions, and made such rapid progress that the hopes of his teacher rose high. He was daily rewarded for his diligence by a meal of wholesome victuals, but his joy of joys was to hear Bertha read a chapter to him from the Bible and afterwards explain it.

“Do you know what this means, Tommy?” she asked one day, and she read:—
“‘But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.’”

"I think I do. It means that no matter how bad any one is to us we mustn't be vexed at 'em, and if we can do anything for 'em we ought to."

"Yes, that is what it means, Tommy. Do you think you could do that?"

"I don't know, Miss Bertha. I'm afraid not always."

"Do you think you could forgive Donald now for killing your dog?"

Tommy hung his head for a moment, while a fierce conflict waged in his little breast. Even yet the ready tears sprang to his eyes at mention of his dead favourite, but after a little he looked up clearly and truthfully in Bertha's face, and answered,—
"I think I could. Jesus forgave the wicked men that nailed him to the cross, and that was a great deal worse than for Mr. Donald to kill Button. Besides, I bit Mr. Donald and vexed him, and Jesus never done anything to the men that killed him."

Both were silent for a little time, then Tommy spoke, half-timidly, as if in doubt how his request would be received :

“ Miss Bertha ? ”

“ Well, Tommy.”

“ Why don’t you tell Mr. Donald all these things ? ”

“ All what things ? ”

“ About Jesus, and how it grieves him when we vex one another.”

Bertha knew not what to reply. How could she tell him that her cousin had been instructed in the truths of the gospel from his infancy, and yet strayed more widely from their practice than this poor neglected child.

“ It would not do for me to dictate to my cousin who, is older than I, Tommy,” she answered gently. “ He can read the Bible for himself, and it will tell him what he ought to do.”

“ But won’t you tell him to read it ? ”

Tommy urged. "And, Miss Bertha," he added, with an effort, his face flushing while he spoke, "won't you tell him for me that I'm sorry I was so ugly about Button?"

"I will be sure to tell him, Tommy," Bertha answered, with tearful eyes.

Already the seed she had sown was bearing precious fruit. Tommy had prevailed on his father to accompany him to church, and, as his feeling of awkwardness wore off, he gradually became a regular attendant. His wages were employed in procuring comfortable food and clothing for himself and Tommy, instead of being squandered at the public-house; and his leisure hours were spent in restoring some degree of decency to their wretched dwelling.

The change in the house was quite as marked as that of the inmates. By use of a whitewash brush the smoky walls had been cleansed and sweetened, the rags were removed from the window, and the sash

newly glazed. A rude bedstead was constructed ; and the heap of straw placed in it, with a decent covering, gave it more the appearance of a bed for human beings than a nest for swine. The benches and table were mended, and, under Bertha's direction, Tommy made a vigorous application of soap and water to both them and the floor, thereby greatly improving their appearance. The cottage was now a very paradise in point of cleanliness and comfort to what it was on the occasion of Bertha's first visit.

She no longer feared to sit down when she came to see Tommy and talk with him about his garden. Never was Tommy's joy at a greater height than when he was first able to offer his kind friend a boquet of his own growing. They were coarse, homely flowers, but Bertha accepted them as gracefully as if they had been the rarest exotics the world could afford.

Tommy's time was now fully occupied

with his household duties, attending to his garden and his daily lesson from Bertha. He was to attend the parish school in winter, when Bertha would be in town and could not teach him. He had stayed away because the parish boys laughed at his ragged clothes, but now that they were clean and well mended he did not fear to go.

Bertha reported his message to her cousin, and tears actually filled the eyes of the proud youth when he heard it.

"He is better than I am, Bertha," he answered. "It is to your gentle influence he owes this change in his feelings towards me."

"Not to my influence, Donald, but to that of the Holy Spirit."

"I wish I could make some reparation for the injury I have done the child," said Donald thoughtfully.

"Be friends with him. It is all the recompense he requires."

"But it is not all I wish to make. You are his father confessor, Bertha; do you not know of anything he wants?"

"He has confided to me, in all secrecy, that he is saving every stray penny that comes in his way to buy a pair of woollen mittens for a Christmas present to his father."

"Ho! then, woollen mittens! the end and aim of this youngster's ambition!" said Donald, with mock enthusiasm. "Behold! cousin, mine; here is the price of the desired articles; deliver them with my best wishes to your juvenile *protege*."

"But, Donald, that won't do. He is desirous of earning them all himself, and I don't think he will be satisfied to accept them as a gift."

"Then what will I do?"

"I have an idea."

"A brilliant one, no doubt. Do, I beg, give me the benefit of it."

"You must employ him on various errands, and pay him four-fold for all he does."

"Truly, that will be an admirable plan. Think you it will never enter his verdant brain that I am over-paying him?"

"I think not; and if it does, you can silence his scruples by telling him he can put a portion of it in the Missionary-box."

"Oh! is it possible! Our little Bertha preaching up chicanery this way. What an awful doing evil, that good may come of it!"

"Why, do you think we are doing any harm?" Bertha spoke and looked so gravely that it amused Donald infinitely, and he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"Harm, Bertha!" he repeated: "What put that into your head? How should I know? My standard of moral excellence is so very different from yours, that what would seem to me very good might be the depth of iniquity for you."

"But I should be sorry to sanction anything like deception or falsehood."

"Bless you! there is neither in this present case: not even a white lie. And now tell me when I can see this young savage—excuse me,—Christian," he added, seeing Bertha looked hurt at the expression.

"He will be here in about an hour to say his lesson. Shall I tell him you want him?"

"Yes! I am going trout-fishing this afternoon, and as he knows every bend of the stream he may be useful; at all events he can carry my traps for me."

"And give my lazy cousin an opportunity of viewing the beauties of nature with his hands in his pockets," said Bertha.

"Well, you told me I must find something for him to do; and I'm sure I don't know what else it'll be, unless I hire him to fan me."

Tommy stood aghast when Bertha delivered her cousin's message.

"Are you sure he wants me, Miss Bertha?"

"Yes, Tommy."

"And are you sure he isn't vexed with me?"

"No, Tommy; and there he is waiting for you on the end of the veranda," said Bertha, pointing to where Donald stood with fishing-rods over his shoulder and hooks and lines in his hand.

"Well, Tommy! do you think you can show me any place where there will be plenty of trout?" Donald asked, when he came up.

"Oh, yes!" Tommy answered briskly, "there's lots of 'em down in Jones' meadow; great big fellows, too!"

"Ready to jump into the basket, I suppose," Donald said, laughing; and away they went.

They had a glorious afternoon's sport. Tommy knew every haunt of these speckled denizens of the stream, and by sunset they

had their basket full. Donald shared the spoil with Tommy, much against the will of the latter : and when they were parting he put a half dollar into his hand.

"Oh, no ! Mr. Donald, I wouldn't take it nohow ; I'm more than paid with these," said Tommy, pointing to his string of fish.

"But that's nothing," Donald answered ; "if it had not been for you I wouldn't have found such a good place for fishing."

"But I'd rather not take the money."

"Why not, Tommy ?"

"'Cause I didn't earn it."

"But I think you did earn it, Tommy ; and if you don't take it I'll think you bear malice towards me about that unfortunate quarrel we had."

Tommy resisted no longer ; but when they were parting for the night he lingered at the gate, looking wistfully at Donald. He noticed his hesitation and relieved him by saying,—

"Well, Tommy, do you want anything now? If you do, don't be afraid to ask."

"I don't want anything, only to know if you'll forgive me for biting you that morning?"

"I have more need to ask your forgiveness, Tommy, for my cruel, unjust conduct," said Donald; more moved than he would have cared to confess.

"But," Tommy persisted, "if I hadn't bit, you wouldn't have killed Button; so it was most my fault."

"We were both in fault, Tommy; I most of all. Tell me, truly, can you forgive me for the injury I have done you?"

"Oh, yes! I forgave you long ago."

"Then let us say no more about it," said Donald, taking Tommy's hand in his; "and remember if ever you want a friend in future I am at your service."

"Thank you, Mr. Donald," said Tommy,

with a full heart, and he scampered home with his load of fish.

From that day Tommy was the constant companion of Donald in his fishing and hunting excursions, and before Donald left for college he had more than the price of his mittens made up.

When at last they did part, it was with real regret on both sides ; and Bertha often remarked that it was not without advantage to both,—Donald's quarrel with Tommy Vincent.



CHAPTER V.

AN EVENING TALK.

THE last rays of the setting sun were gilding the rich furniture in Mr. Eswald's parlour, where Bertha sat at the piano, singing a hymn. Donald Wilson was gone, and feeling rather lonely, she had sought to solace herself with the all-powerful charm of music. Her fingers fell softly and lightly on the instrument, and her sweet clear voice floated out in unison with the scene and hour.

She had just finished a pleasant melody when she was startled in the pause that followed, by hearing a voice at the door exclaim—

“That's splendid!” and looking around

she saw Tommy Vincent's black head disappearing behind the door.

He had been in the house on some errand, and hearing the strains of music from the parlour, had crept silently to the door. There he had stood entranced, until his unlucky exclamation betrayed his presence. He darted out into the hall and would have made his escape, but the door by which he had entered was shut, and before he could get it open Bertha's hand was on his shoulder.

"What ! Tommy ! are you running away from me ?" she exclaimed. "You're not afraid of me, are you ?"

"No, Miss Bertha, but I was afraid you might be vexed. I didn't mean any harm, indeed I didn't," said Tommy earnestly.

"You foolish child !" said Bertha, laughing, to be afraid of me. I'm sure it was no harm to listen to me playing. "Come into the parlour and I'll play you a tune."

Tommy looked at his bare feet and then at the velvety carpet, as if doubtful about the propriety of entering.

"Never mind the carpet," said Bertha, observing his embarrassment. "Come on. It's not so easily spoiled."

He followed her ; and leaning against the piano, watched her, with his whole soul in his eyes, while she sang :

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee ;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou henceforth my all shalt be !
I have called thee Abba ! Father !
I have set my heart on thee,
Storms may howl and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me !

"Perish every fond ambition
All I've sought, or hoped, or known,
Yet how rich is my condition—
God and Heaven are all my own !
Go, then, earthly fame and treasure !
Come disaster, scorn and pain ;
In thy service pain is pleasure—
With thy favour loss is gain !

Soul ! then know thy full salvation !
Rise o'er sin and grief and ease ;
Joy to find in every station
Something still to do or bear.
Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith and winged by prayer,
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,—
God's own hand shall guide thee there

“ Earth may trouble and distress me,
’Twill but drive me to thy breast ;
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heaven will give me sweeter rest,
Oh ! ’tis not in grief to harm me,
While thy love is left to me !
Oh ! ’twere not in joy to charm me
Were that joy apart from thee.”

Tommy thought of the white-robed saints with their golden crowns, as he watched Bertha in her white dress, her golden hair brightened by the evening sun.

“ What are you thinking of, Tommy ? ” she asked, observing his rapt attention.

“ I was thinking of Heaven, Miss Bertha.”

“ No wonder you looked happy then.”

“ Would you like to go there, Miss Bertha ? ”

"Yes, Tommy."

The child looked around at the costly furniture of the apartment, out on the brilliant flower garden, and still farther beyond where the extensive park stretched in all the varied beauty of hill and level, plain and woodland. To one like him, brought up in poverty, this home of affluence seemed to present as many glories as heaven itself. The one was a certain and tangible reality ; the other seemed a dim and distant possibility.

Bertha understood the thoughts that were passing through his mind, and said, softly : " This earth is very fair, Tommy, but Heaven is fairer. The brightest home in this world may be dimmed by sorrow and desolated by death ; but there parting is unknown and sorrow never enters."

" Would you be afraid to die, Miss Bertha ? "

" No ; for ' though I pass through the

valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me : Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' ”

“ I wouldn't like to die,” said Tommy, shuddering.

“ If your sins are forgiven you need not be afraid to die ; it is only those who are wicked that need have any fear of death.”

“ But I've been so wicked, Miss Bertha,” said Tommy, sobbing ; “ I used to tell lies and steal, and be awful bad. I'm afraid I can't ever be good enough to go to Heaven.”

“ ‘ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ ”

“ Does that mean, Miss Bertha, no matter how bad we are, the Lord will forgive us ? ”

“ No matter how bad we may be, Tommy, if we truly repent and pray to Jesus, He will hear and pardon us. We must pray every day, and believe while we pray, that God will hear us for Christ's sake.”

"I do pray, Miss Bertha, but it seems as though no one will hear me."

"You must have faith."

"What is faith?"

"It is trusting and believing that God will do what He has promised; without it our prayers will avail little."

Bertha arose, and taking a book from the table gave it to Tommy, saying,—

"Here is a Bible I have bought for you, Tommy; "in it I have marked most of your favourite passages: those we have read together. I want you to read them when I am gone, and think of me sometimes."

"Are you going away, Miss Bertha?" Tommy asked, with quivering lips.

"Yes, we are going to town in a few days, but you will hear from me while I am away. I hope to come back here next summer, if I live; and you will not forget me before that time, will you?"

"I will never forget you, Miss Bertha,"

Tommy answered, very seriously; "but I don't know how I'll live without you. 'Pears like I'll have no one to help me when you're gone. I try and try to be good, but it seems as though the more I try the worse I am."

"Poor child!" said Bertha, compassionately, "it does seem as though all our efforts to be good are ineffectual sometimes; and so they are if they are made in our own strength. But, Tommy, you must not say you will not have any one to help you when I am gone. There is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, who will never leave you nor forsake you. He can help you much more than I can; and will, if you only ask Him!"

"Is it Jesus you mean, Miss Bertha?"

"Yes, it is Jesus."

"Do you think He likes me, Miss Bertha?"

"I am sure of it, Tommy. He says, 'I love them that love me, and those who seek

me early shall find me.' You love Him, do you not ? "

" Yes ; but I thought may be He wouldn't care as much for boys like me, with old clothes and ugly faces, as he would for nice young ladies like you, that wore fine dresses and looked so pretty."

" It makes no difference to Jesus how you look Tommy, or what you wear ; it is the heart He looks at ; and if He sees you love Him, and try to do what He wants you, He cares for you just as much as if you were ever so pretty and well dressed. Do you believe this, Tommy ? "

" I don't know ; I don't see how He can care for me when I've been so bad all my life, and kept so far away from Him."

" I will tell you a story, Tommy, that will, perhaps, explain this more fully to you. Once there was a little lamb who lived in a bright green field, with a lot of other sheep. They had a kind shepherd to take care of

them, and he had chosen a beautiful pasture for his little flock. The grass was soft and green, and sprinkled over with blossoms of the clover and daisy ; clear, limpid streams ran through the field, out of which they might drink when they were thirsty ; and lofty trees shaded them from the heat of the noon-day sun, and lulled them to sleep with the music of their leaves. When night came, the shepherd would come and lead them to the fold, where they rested peacefully and securely until the morning light again set them free. All were happy and contented until this little lamb was seized with a desire to see what was going on in the world beyond. Then the quiet fold was too narrow for it, and it grew restless and discontented. One night when the shepherd came to shut them up, this silly lamb hid, and when everything grew still it came out, and crawling through a gap in the fence, got into the wide plain outside. It ran and skipped on the grass, and thought how much

nicer that was than to be shut up in a close fold. By-and-bye the moon went under a cloud, and in the dark the lamb wandered far away; it fell over logs and stones, and tore its soft fleece on sharp thorns, and at last it laid down, tired and hungry. When morning came it looked around, but the fields, which from its own happy home seemed so bright and cheerful, were now cold and dreary. There was no soft grass, no cool, sparkling waters, nor no green trees for it to rest under. It struggled to its feet and tried to find its way back to its own pleasant fold, but its wool caught on the brambles and it fell and bruised its limbs; till at last, tired and faint, it lay down to die. Tears filled its eyes when it thought of its kind mother, and the green fields of the flock, where it would never wander again; but just then it heard a step approaching, and looking up it saw its own kind shepherd come to take it home. He spoke no cross word, but kindly and tenderly

raised the shivering creature, and warming it in his bosom he carried it back to the fold. The little lamb never wandered away again, and, among all the flock, none loved so dearly the good shepherd or felt so grateful as it."

"I think I know what you mean by that, Miss Bertha," Tommy said, when she had finished; "I'm like the lamb that went away from the fold."

"And who was the good Shepherd?"

"It was Jesus, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Tommy. And as the shepherd went to meet the lamb, so Jesus is coming to meet you. He does not rebuke you for staying away so long; He is glad to see you coming at all; and He holds out His loving arms inviting you to go to Him, and He will give you rest. Will you not go to Him, Tommy?"

"I will, Miss Bertha."

"Do, Tommy, and He will not reject you."

CHAPTER VI.

SCHOOL TRIALS AND CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

It was the day before Christmas. The school-boys were gathered around the stove each telling of his plan of enjoyment for the festive week, except Tommy Vincent, who sat apart silent and sad.

"What are you going to do, Tommy?" said one of the larger boys, coming up to him.

"Nothing, I guess;" Tommy answered with a sigh.

"Oh! what would you expect him to do at Christmas but stop in the house and patch his jacket, when his father's too poor to buy him a new one," said another boy, provokingly.

"Yes," said the first speaker, "if his father wasn't a drunkard he might have some sport, as well as the rest of us."

"My father isn't a drunkard!" said Tommy, with flashing eyes.

"He is! he gets drunk every Saturday night," the other contradicted.

"He doesn't!" Tommy shouted, clenching his fist, and making a rush at his tormentor; "I'll knock you down if you say so again!" but when within two paces of him, Bertha's words, "When He was reviled, reviled not again," darted into his mind. The uplifted hand fell, his flushed cheek paled with the effort he made to regain his self-composure.

He went away into a quiet corner of the hall and wept bitterly.

"How wicked I was to get in such a passion all about nothing; Miss Bertha would never care for me again if she had seen me."

All through the afternoon he was silent and subdued, and when the arithmetic class was called up he found himself side by side with the boy who had insulted him. He was a stupid fellow, as such swaggering characters generally are, and had often applied to Tommy for assistance, who, though much younger, was in the same class with himself. To-day Tommy's question was neatly and correctly finished, while his neighbour sat poring over his slate, unable to get the answer, and fearful of the punishment his negligence would draw down.

"Shall I help you, George?" Tommy asked.

"I wish you would," George answered. "This sum is awful hard to do. I don't see how you got done so quick;" and George wiped the perspiration from his brow that his efforts had called forth.

Tommy looked over his slate for a moment.

"Why, see here," said he, "you have said

twice two are six, and in another place nine will go into twenty-seven four times."

"So I have," said George, ashamed of his stupidity and of his previous conduct to Tommy, but too proud to own it.

"I say, youngster!" Mr. Brown, the keeper of the express office, called to Tommy as he was passing that night, "There's a box here for you. Do you think you'll be able to carry it home."

"I guess I will," Tommy answered, following him into his office, where a good-sized box was sitting on the floor.

"It's from Miss Bertha, I know it is," said Tommy, capering around it gleefully.

"If you think it's too heavy for you, I'm going down your way in the morning with the cart, and I can drop it at the door as well as not," said Mr. Brown.

Tommy's curiosity could never wait until morning to be satisfied, so he declared himself quite equal to the task of carrying it;

and shouldering it, not without difficulty, he started off. He was fain to rest more than once; but at last he reached home, and placing his burden on the table, had the lid off in a trice.

The first thing which he pulled out was an overcoat of warm grey cloth for himself, and one like it for his father; then came two warm woollen comforters; and underneath all a square hard package, carefully tied in brown papers. Wondering what it could be, he untied the strings and exposed to view a beautiful engraving, framed and glazed. It represented a shining spirit, holding a crown, and leading by the hand a little child. The way seemed rough, and the child seemed ready to stumble with weariness; but the Angel pointed ever to the Holy City in the distance, where there stood a legion of happy spirits to receive them. Underneath was written the text: "To him that overcometh will I grant to

sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

"That's Miss Bertha and me!" Tommy cried with glistening eyes, when he saw the picture, and he hung it carefully on the wall where he could see it whenever he raised his eyes.

He re-examined the box to see if he had over-looked anything, and was rewarded by finding a letter in the bottom. He could not read it, and so he had to curb his impatience until his father's return, and after the various gifts had been examined and the munificence of Miss Bertha duly extolled, he sat down to listen to Bertha's letter. It ran thus :

"MY DEAR TOMMY,

" You will, I know, be glad to hear from your old friend sometimes, who often thinks about you and wishes to see

you. I hope you are going to school and learning very fast, as I expect to see a great improvement in you when I return. I hope you are keeping within the fold of the Good Shepherd, and are beginning to find that the way of holiness is the way of happiness. Doubtless you have many trials to contend with that I know not of; but be not discouraged in well-doing. Remember we are told, that in the world we shall have tribulation, but in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

“I send you an overcoat to keep you warm when you are going to school, and one for your father like it. Donald sends the comforters, and wants you to accept them for old acquaintance sake. The picture is for you. I selected it thinking it might please you. Be sure and have your garden in nice order when I come back on the first of May, for I intend to come and see it. Hoping you will spend a very merry Christmas and

happy New Year, and with best wishes for yourself and father,

“ Believe me to be

“ Your sincere friend,

“ BERTHA ESWALD.”

“ That’s a very nice letter, Tommy,” said David Vincent, when he had finished reading it. “ Miss Bertha’s a nice young lady ; not a bit proud nor stuck up. Now let’s have some supper.”

A widow woman who lived near them was employed to scrub their house and do their baking, as such duties would interfere with Tommy’s studies ; and as he prepared their frugal but clean meal, he could not help contrasting the present Christmas-eve with the past one.

“ It’s all to Miss Bertha we owe the change,” said Tommy gratefully.

“ Or rather to God who has sent her to us as a ministering angel,” his father answered.

Tommy had procured the much coveted

mitten for his father, but he could hardly keep them until morning. He did manage to keep them secret though, by indulging in sundry stealthy peeps at them himself. Then, when breakfast was ready, he laid them in all their glory of red and black, by his father's plate.

"Why, Tommy, who are these for?" David asked when he came to the table.

"They're for you, daddy."

"For me? How did you get them?"

"I saved the money last summer."

"Well, I never! And you bought these mittens for me instead of spendin' the money for yourself," said David, with a sort of fatherly pride.

Tommy was more delighted with this praise than if he had received a gift for himself of ten times the value. By degrees the father and son cherished more kindly feelings towards one another, until liking deepened into love. The winter sped

swiftly and pleasantly away. Tommy made great advancement in his studies, but he inwardly pined for Bertha's return. To none could he open his heart as freely as to her. She possessed the key of his most secret thoughts, and to her he confided all his little troubles.

When the first warm days of spring had thawed the snow, he was busy in his little garden, hoeing, planting, and weeding, so as to have everything in order before her return. And great was his joy when he heard she had really arrived.



CHAPTER VII.

BERTHA'S RETURN.

"HOME, dear home," sighed Bertha Eswald as the carriage rolled over the smooth road. "Are we almost there, papa?" she asked, leaning wearily back among the cushions.

"Almost, my darling!" answered her fond parent; "I can already see the chimneys of our house. Are you very tired, dearest?" he asked, noting with alarm how pale she was growing.

"Not very, papa; I will be better when we get there," answered the sick girl, for Bertha Eswald was sick unto death.

All through the winter she had been sinking gradually, but surely. She grew weaker, without any disease apparent to the eye

and all remedies were alike ineffectual. She had begged to be brought back to the country, not from the hope of receiving any benefit, but that she might see the last of earth in that home she had loved so well. For such as her there was no death: only a transition from the things of time to the fuller and more abiding joys of eternity. But who can describe the anguish and desolation of those loving hearts she would leave behind.

Donald Wilson was constantly by her side, and watched over her with the affection of a brother. With grief, too deep for words, he saw her passing away from him, and knew that the place which then knew her would soon know her no more forever. But this first great affliction was not without its good results, for it was at the couch of his dying cousin that he first learned to bow his proud spirit at the foot of the Cross

and yield to the guidance of Him who doeth all things well.

And there was another, who had regarded his daughter with an idolatrous love, that first was taught by her to submit to the dictates of Him who cannot err.

"I cannot give you up, Bertha!" he said, when first told that his child must die; "the sacrifice is too great; it is more than flesh and blood can endure!"

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son and daughter in whom He delighteth;" Bertha answered. "He doth not willingly afflict the children of men. Dear papa, it is all for the best. Do try and believe it."

"I cannot, Bertha! What have I done that the only object I have to love should be rent from me?"

"Nothing but love me too well. He is only taking me that you may follow; when I am in Heaven you will want to come too,

and we will at last meet, an unbroken family, in that world where parting is unknown."

"Oh, my child!" murmured the stricken parent, "if you were spared to me, your sweet guiding spirit might allure me to that brighter world which is your fitting home; but without you what can I do, or who will lend me a helping hand?"

"There is a Helper mightier than I; a Captain who was never defeated in battle nor foiled in victory. He will be with you in every time of need, and will never suffer those who trust in Him to be dismayed. It will not be long, dearest papa; only a few more days of pain, a few more nights of weakness, and then your wife and child will meet you at Heaven's gate."

By degrees Mr. Eswald grew more reconciled to the thought of losing her, but even yet it caused him intense pain to hear her speak of death. "I am coming home to

die!" she said, sweetly, when they helped her from the carriage, on the evening of her arrival.

"Do not say so, cousin," Donald Wilson replied, as he helped her up the steps; "the country air may revive you. I cannot give up all hope yet."

"Don't delude yourself with false hopes, Donald," Bertha replied; "I will never be well again."

"How delightful this is," she said, when comfortably established on the sofa in the parlour; "I am so glad that I was able to reach this dear place once more. If I could only see Tommy now."

"You are too tired, Bertha," her father answered; "in the morning, when you are rested, we will send for him."

Tommy had been her constant thought. All through the winter she had expressed an anxiety to see him, and now that her

strength was failing so fast this feeling increased.

"It is strange what an interest you take in that child," said her father to her one day.

"It is," said Bertha, "I am often astonished at it myself; but from the first time I saw his little brown face I liked him. I believe he is destined to be a great and good man, if his life is spared."

"You always have very sanguine expectations of every one, Bertha," said Donald Wilson; "are you not often disappointed?"

"Not very often, Donald," Bertha answered, slipping her hand in his. "I know one who has more than come up to the mark I set for him."

"Then your mark was not placed very high, if I am the individual you refer to," Donald replied, smiling, and caressing the soft white hand that lay in his.

"I do not agree with you there, cousin; you have many noble qualities."

"And many bad ones to counter-balance them. Do you remember what was said of the Duke of Orleans by his mother? Good fairies had blessed her son with all noble endowments at his birth, but one spiteful member of the sisterhood had decreed that he should never be benefitted by them."

Bertha was better next morning, so much better that she felt strong enough to take a short ride on her favourite pony, "Jessie." He was saddled and brought round, greeting his long-absent mistress with a low whining of delight as he again felt the touch of her fondling hand.

"Let us ride down to Tommy's house and surprise him," said Bertha to Donald, as he assisted her into the saddle.

Donald assented, and they rode off. Tommy was busy at work in his little garden when he heard the sound of a well-

known voice calling him. He flew to the fence, and there to his great delight saw the face of his kindest and dearest friend smiling brightly on him.

"Oh! Miss Bertha! is it you come at last? I'm so glad!" and he scrambled over the fence, seized her extended hand, and covered it with kisses of joy.

"Then you have'nt forgot me, Tommy," said Bertha, who was as much delighted as the child.

"Forgotten you, Miss Bertha! I guess I have'nt. I've thought of you every day and every hour since you went away, and I've got my garden all fixed, and it looks beautiful."

Bertha said she must dismount and see it; and Donald helped her to alight, while Tommy ran to bring a stool for her to sit on. She admired the garden, to Tommy's satisfaction; and it really reflected much credit on him. The weeds were all pulled

up, the beds neatly arranged, and what few plants there were, were in a thriving condition. Bertha's small stock of strength was soon exhausted ; and Donald, alarmed at the gathering pallor of her countenance, proposed a return.

"You must come and see me to-morrow, Tommy ;" Bertha said to him, as she was leaving. "I have a great deal to say to you, which I have not time to tell now. And you can get some more plants for your garden, too."

"Thank you, Miss Bertha, I will ; and you must come and see my garden when it is growing nicely."

Bertha could not pain the kind little heart by telling him she would never again visit his garden. She smiled sweetly on him, and allowed Donald to lead her to her horse.

Tommy reported her visit to his father

that evening, expressing it as his belief that "Miss Bertha was lovelier than ever."

The exertion was almost too much for her frail frame ; and when they reached home, Donald lifted her from the horse, and carried her to the sofa.

"Poor Jessie !" she murmured, as she saw her led past the window, "I have taken my last ride on you !"

Donald leaned his head on her shoulder, and, notwithstanding the dignity of his nineteen years, sobbed aloud.

"Donald ! dear Donald !" said Bertha, laying her weak hand on his head, "What is the matter with you ?"

"Oh ! Bertha, darling cousin ; I thought you were so much better this morning that you might be spared to us yet ; and now I see you sinking before my eyes."

"Dear Donald ! you must be resigned ;" said Bertha gently.

"I am resigned, Bertha; but it is so hard to part with you."

"I know it is; but Jesus can make hard things easy."

"He seems to have withdrawn Himself from me this morning, and left me to stand alone."

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. He is our refuge and strength: a very present help in time of trouble."

The deceitful illusion which had buoyed Donald up for a little time, passed away, and he knew from that hour that the time with his sweet cousin would be short. Daily those around that dying couch, grew more and more sanctified under the gentle influence of the sick girl. Already her brow was fanned by angel wings, and the shining shore was hourly becoming more distinct to her sight.

Tommy came next day, as he had pro-

mised, and was taken to Bertha's room, where she reclined on a couch.

"I'm glad you've come, Tommy," she said, reaching out her hand to him when he entered.

"Are you sick, Miss Bertha?" he asked, with the ready sympathy of a child. He saw that the bright colour, which had given her cheeks the appearance of perfect health the morning before, was now all faded, leaving them almost as white as her spotless wrapper. Her golden hair fell back from her face in loose masses, showing the blue veins on her brow so plain as to be almost palpable.

"I am not well, Tommy; but I hope soon to be better. When I get home to my Father's house I will not suffer any more pain or sickness."

"Are you going away, again Miss Bertha?" Tommy asked sadly; for he did not understand the meaning of her words.

"Yes ! I am going to a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens."

"Oh ! Miss Bertha ! you don't mean you're going never to come back. You're not going to die, are you ?" Tommy cried ; while sob after sob rose to his throat, and the hot tears rolled thickly over his cheeks.

"Yes ! Tommy ; I'm going to Heaven, that beautiful home which you and I have so often read about together. It is Jesus who has called me, and you must be resigned to His will. Do not grieve for me very much when I am gone, but think of me as happy with our Saviour, and prepare to meet me there when you are called to die."

Gradually his grief calmed down, under the influence of her soft, sweet voice ; and after a little, Bertha asked him if he would read to her.

"What chapter shall I read, Miss Bertha ?" he asked, as he opened the Bible.

"Read any one," she replied; "they are all beautiful;" and Tommy began at those soothing words of the Evangelist, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Many and frequent were the pauses he made, for tears choked his utterance when he thought of the one so soon going to inhabit the place prepared for her.

"Is the page blotted, Tommy?" Bertha asked, when he stopped longer than usual.

"No, it's not blotted," he answered; and here he fairly broke down, and sobbed violently.

"Is it for me you are grieving, Tommy?" said Bertha, laying her hand on his bowed head.

"Yes, Miss Bertha. I can't bear to think you're going to die!"

"My poor child!" said Bertha kindly; "you must not fret so about me. I will be spared yet some days, I hope. And you

must come and see me very often. You know I am not able to go to you any more."

"I will be sure to come, Miss Bertha," Tommy answered; wiping away his fast-falling tears as he left the room.

It was the child's first great sorrow, and he felt it keenly. He had looked on his kind benefactress with a sort of veneration; and the thought that a being so bright and beautiful must die seemed to him very terrible. He was early learning the fleeting, transitory nature of earthly joys, and laid up an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God endureth forever."



CHAPTER VIII.

HALYCON DAYS.

WEEKS went by, and the sweet summer weather visited the earth, bringing bloom to tree and flower, and yet Bertha Eswald lingered with those she loved. They were very happy days, those last ones spent with that angelic spirit. The sting of death had been taken away, and though they, who watched over her with an all-absorbing tenderness, knew that days of loneliness and bitter mourning were in store for them, yet they were willing to give themselves up to the enjoyment of the present, and sought not to penetrate the future. There was a beguiling serenity in every word and smile

of the dear invalid, that shewed how ripe she was for Heaven.

"Would you not like to get well, Bertha?" Donald Wilson asked of her one day.

"For the sake of you and my father I would be willing to live some years longer, but only for you; I would rather depart and live with Jesus, which is far better."

"I cannot understand this longing to die, Bertha. When age has dimmed our perceptions of enjoyment, or sorrow has blunted our appetite for earthly pleasures, then it seems to me but natural that we should wish to die; but to one like you, who has all that can make life attractive—wealth, beauty, friends—the feeling seems strange and unaccountable."

"Ah! Donald, over earth's fairest bowers the destroyer has left his traces. It is only in Heaven the rose is without a thorn, the sunshine without a shadow. In all your life, Donald, how many hours of unalloyed

happiness can you number? How many days are there that you would be tempted to live over?"

Donald bowed his head in serious thought for a while, then he looked up and answered, slowly:—

"I cannot remember one day, not one hour, Bertha, that I can truly say I feel a desire to live again. In my happiest moments there was always some desire unattained, some wish ungratified; and my pleasures have been to me Dead Sea fruit, ever turning to ashes as I grasped them."

"Then can you wonder that I should rejoice at approaching a land where disappointments cannot come, and where the serpent has never introduced the poison of sin?"

"You have chosen that good part, Bertha, which shall not be taken away from you," Donald said softly.

The conversation was here broken in

upon by Tommy, who appeared at the door. He hesitated to enter until invited; but Bertha saw him, and held out her hand. He came forward, holding in his hand a small bunch of flowers that he had gathered for her, but was ashamed to offer them. Bertha observed them, and divining his intention, asked,—

“Were those flowers for me, Tommy?”

“Yes, Miss Bertha, if you want ‘em.”

“To be sure I want them, if you gathered them for me;” Bertha answered, taking the humble offering.

“I was afraid maybe you would’nt think ‘em worth having, you have such nice ones.”

“I am always glad to take anything from you, Tommy; and these flowers are very nice indeed. How is your garden getting on?”

“It looks real lovely, Miss Bertha, and the white rose is all covered with blossoms,” and Tommy descanted on the beauties of

his flowers in a way that would have tired any listener less patient than Bertha.

"Will you tell your father I would like to see him to-morrow evening, if he has time to come over for a little while," Bertha said to Tommy, when he was leaving.

"I will tell him," Tommy answered ; wondering much what she could wish to see his father for.

That night when Mr. Eswald was leaving his child for the night, she detained him a moment.

"Papa, I wish to ask you a question."

"Well, my darling, ask anything you please."

"That annuity which mamma left me. Is it mine to do what I please with?"

"Certainly, my child ; I have nothing to do with your disposal of it."

"And may I leave it to whoever I wish?" Bertha asked eagerly.

"Of course you can."

"Then, papa, I would like to leave it to Tommy Vincent. I wish him to be educated for the ministry, and this money will be sufficient for the purpose ; that is, if you do not object to putting it to that use."

"I do not object to the use you make of it ; but, Bertha, I thought you objected to uncalled ministers."

"So I do, papa ; and I do not wish to force Tommy into the profession. Leave him to decide his calling for himself when he is of a proper age to do so, and if he does not wish to enter the ministry his education will be no burden to him. I will leave it all in your hands, papa, to arrange. Will you undertake the charge of it ?"

"I will endeavour to do everything as you would wish, my child," said the fond father.

Much as David Vincent had heard from Tommy of the splendour of Bertha's home, it was almost with a feeling of awe that he

entered that dwelling of wealth and luxury. His feet trod on silken carpets, his eye beheld rich furniture, costly paintings, and marble statuary. To him it seemed like fairy-land, and his senses were bewildered by the new and strange sights about him. But when he gained Bertha's presence she at once set him at his ease, by inquiring about his health, his employment, and various important matters.

"And what do you intend to do with Tommy?" she asked. "Have you any trade marked out for him as yet?"

"Well, no, Miss, I can't say as I have. He seems very fond of his book, and I'd like to keep him at it as long as I can; but I don't suppose I'll be able to give him any great larnin',—not as I'd like to."

"Would you be willing to have him educated for a minister?"

"Well, you see, Miss, there ain't much

use talkin' about being willin' when I have'nt anything to do it with."

"But if I furnish the money, you will not have any objection to him pursuing such a course, provided Tommy himself is willing?" Bertha questioned, anxiously.

"No, I don't know that I have," he answered. And after a few more remarks he took his leave, saying to himself, that if ever there was a saint on this earth, Miss Bertha was one.

"I'm going away, Miss Bertha," Tommy said, on the occasion of his next visit.

"Where to?" Bertha asked.

"Down to 'Squire Morgan's, to mind his sheep; but I'm only going to stop a week. I wouldn't go, only daddy wants me to."

"You must do what your father tells you to; but I'm sorry you are going, Tommy," Bertha answered; for she thought she might never see him again. "You will be sure to

come and see me as soon as you get back, won't you ?”

“ Oh, yes ! I'll be sure to come,” Tommy responded hopefully ; for he saw no sign of death in the bright, loving countenance before him.

“ And, Tommy,” Bertha continued, “ I want to give you something to remind you of me.” So saying she took up a portrait of herself, and handed it to him. Tommy's face beamed with delight as he took it.

“ Do you like it, Tommy ?”

“ Yes, Miss Bertha ; it's lovely !”

And it was indeed. The deep brown eyes and fair features, shaded by waves of golden hair, were destined to endure uninjured by time, long after the fair original had faded into dust.

“ And this book, Tommy,” said Bertha, giving him a Bible, in which she had inscribed his name, “ take it, and ponder its holy teachings well, remembering if you

obey its precepts, that though we may not meet again in time, we will dwell together through the endless ages of a happy eternity."

Tommy carried his gifts home with a full heart, little thinking that he would never have another interview with Bertha Eswald.



CHAPTER IX.

GOING HOME.

It was Saturday afternoon. The windows and doors of Mr. Eswald's parlour were open to catch every passing breeze, for the July heats were almost suffocating. On a couch in the bay-window lay the invalid, in her white robes; Donald Wilson was fanning her, and near by her father sat, with anguish depicted on his countenance. Relatives and friends were gathered in that quiet room, for it was plain to all that the hours of Bertha Eswald's life were few. Her golden locks were already damp with the dews of approaching death; but to her the King of Terrors wore no repulsive aspect; he was but a kind messenger come to conduct her to her Father's home.

"Dear papa," she murmured faintly.

"I am here, my child," her father answered, bending over her.

"I am going, going home. You will come too, will you not?"

"Yes, dearest," he whispered, trying to control his grief for her sake.

"Are you willing, papa, that I should go?"

"I am willing, Bertha. But oh! my child, how desolate I will be without you!"

"God has called me!" said Bertha, reverently raising her large mild eyes towards Heaven. "Though He layeth on with one hand, He upholdeth with the other. He will not try you above that you are able to bear. Remember, dearest papa, that He will not leave the silver in the furnace of affliction one moment after His image is perfected there. These trials may seem very hard to our weak, earthly faith, but when we pass beyond the veil we will acknowledge that there was not one stripe

too much—not one wound too deep for our eternal welfare.”

“And Donald, my dear, good cousin,” continued Bertha, turning to him, “you too will meet me there. Do not allow the vanities of life, and the fleeting pleasures of time, to allure you from your high and holy calling. Turn to the Lord in the morning of your days, while your heart is quickened with the pulses of youth, and then, be your time in this world long or short, you have nothing to fear.”

Slowly her white lids closed over the brown eyes, and she slept so long and quietly, that those who watched her almost feared it was the last sleep. The shades of evening were gathering in the room when she awoke. She looked around the room as if in search of something.

“Did you want anything, dear?” Donald asked.

“I would like to have seen Tommy again,

but I suppose he is not home. Tell him for me, Donald, that I thought of him in my last hours. Tell him to be prayerful, steadfast, nothing doubting, and the promise shall be his ; he will receive a reward more glorious than earth with all her countless hoards can offer."

She was quiet for a little while, then her breath came in quick gasps, and she asked to be raised up. They lifted her up, and her eyes, soon to behold the fadeless bloom of paradise, rested for the last time on the moon-lit garden.

"Do you suffer much pain, my child?" her father asked, as he wiped the death-damps from her brow.

"I have no pain, dearest papa, all is peace : the peace which passeth understanding. The waves of the river of death are surging around me, but underneath are the everlasting arms ; beyond are the shining streets of the New Jerusalem, while angel-

hosts wait to welcome me into glory. Father! cousin! all my kind friends, farewell! I'm going home!"

The mist of death covered her eyes, and they slowly closed forever. There was no moan, no struggle, only a faint, fluttering sigh, and all was over.

"We cannot see the glory which she seeth," said Donald Wilson, as he kissed the cold lips, and turned away.

Tommy Vincent returned home late on Saturday night. His first question was about Bertha.

"She was a little better this morning, I heard," his father answered.

"I wonder if I couldnt see her to-night," said Tommy.

"I wouldnt go to-night, if I was you," his father answered dissuadingly. "She might not want to be bothered; and besides you can go early in the morning."

"Maybe I'd better wait, then. But I do

want to see her so bad," said Tommy, giving up his intention with evident reluctance.

He was up early next morning, dressed in his best, and gathering the brightest sprigs from his little garden, started off in fine spirits.

The housemaid who admitted him, stared at him when he asked for "Miss Bertha;" but she led him along the hall to a closed door, which she softly opened. The house seemed unusually still, and he felt a sort of awe stealing over him as he entered the silent chamber. Everything was draped in white, and on the snowy couch lay a quiet form in the sleep that knows no awaking until the peal of the judgment trumpet.

With a wild and bitter cry Tommy threw the flowers—the poor offering which was all he had to bring to her, who would never again smile in welcome on him—away from him, and falling on the floor by the side of his dead friend, wept as if his heart would break.

The sound attracted the attention of Donald Wilson, who entered from an adjoining room—his eyes red with weeping. Tenderly raising Tommy from the ground, he led him from the room, and taking him out to a quiet place in the shady garden, told him Bertha's last message.

"I thought I'd see her again! I wanted to see her once more," Tommy answered, sobbing violently. "There never was any one so good to me as Miss Bertha was."

"She was good to every one," Donald answered. "None could help loving her."

Tommy grieved long and sincerely for his friend. Months went by, ere he took his accustomed interest in his pursuits.

It seemed to him useless to take any interest in his garden or his studies, when there was no Miss Bertha to approve or encourage. By degrees this feeling wore off, and he began to do as he thought she would wish him to were she yet alive.

His school days were well employed, and from school he went to college. Many and fierce were the conflicts he had with himself, but he was armed with the armour of faith, and determined never to disgrace his calling.

Had he been left to his own choice of a profession, he would have chosen that of the ministry, for he had early felt a desire to preach the glad tidings; but when he heard that it was Bertha's wish, he felt doubly anxious to join the ranks of the Gospel soldiers.

Onward he pressed—growing in grace as he grew in years; and though at times discouraged by trials, and cast down by disappointments, he was often refreshed by wells of water springing up in his way, and palm trees under whose shade he found rest.

Mr. Eswald wandered wearily and aimlessly through the world. He could not remain in the house where every object

reminded him of his lost darling. Little was left on earth to bind him to it, and by degrees he learned to place his heart and affections where his treasures were laid up. In fancy, Bertha was his guiding angel, and lured him on to brighter worlds by the silken cords of affection.

A great change had been wrought in Donald Wilson. The once proud, impetuous boy, was now meek and gentle as a little child. The memory of his cousin was allied to all pure and holy thoughts, and over her early grave he dedicated himself to the service of his Lord, and vowed to live as she would have wished him to live. Nobly has he redeemed his promise, and he is now as a corner-stone polished after the similitude of a temple.

Not in vain was the life of Bertha Eswald, although her sun went down while it was yet day, for of her it may truly be said : " She hath done what she could."

CHAPTER X.

IN THE HEREAFTER.

TOMMY VINCENT lay under the broad spreading branches of an elm tree one sunny Sabbath afternoon, the blue sky above, the green sward beneath, and the sweet-voiced birds filling the balmy air with melody. But to none of these was the attention of the youth directed; there was a look of perplexity in his face, as if he were vainly trying to solve some knotty question, and ever and anon the hand that supported his head was passed thoughtfully across his troubled brow. A book lay open beside him, the breeze idly fluttering the leaves, but the owner was lost to everything,

until he was aroused by a face looking down at him, with a half-amused and wholly sympathetic expression.

"Is that you, Mr. Seton?" Tommy asked, sitting up. "I was thinking so deeply I did not hear you approach."

"What were you thinking about? If it is not an impertinent question," said the minister, sitting down on the grass beside him.

"I was thinking," Tommy replied slowly, "of almost everything. Among the rest of what an aimless and unprofitable life this is."

"Not aimless if we endeavour to promote the glory of God, nor unprofitable if we mind what is to come after."

"No, I suppose not," Tommy sighed. But it seems as though one gets tired of everything at times. Even religion cannot always charm."

"Then the fault is in ourselves, not in religion, which is always and altogether

lovely. It is only in the paths of piety that true peace is found."

"Is it ever found in this world?" Tommy asked wistfully. "I never experienced a single hour of unalloyed happiness.

'I strive to number o'er what days
Remembrance can discover,
Which all that life or earth displays
Would lure me to live over.'

And how many do you compute?

'There rose no day, there rolled no hour
Of pleasure unembittered.'

I can recall no moment when every wish was gratified, and every longing subdued, and sometimes I almost doubt if even in Heaven we will always be content."

"Do not let such thoughts find a resting place in your mind for one instant, Tommy. Has not God told us Himself, have we not His promise contained in His own holy book," Mr. Seton asked, laying his hand on the volume beside him; "that the joys pre-

pared for His chosen people are beyond the conception of the mind of man. 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.'"

"I have read those promises often, but yet there is something I cannot understand. This longing for something higher and holier than we now enjoy, what does it mean?"

"We shall be satisfied when we awaken in His likeness, when we behold the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off. There the fountain of life is never dry, and the source of enjoyment is inexhaustible, and pleasures will never pall the appetite, because our capacity for enjoying them never fails."

"I know all that; I have heard and read descriptions of the New Jerusalem again and again, but it is not the mere beauty of

the city that I allude to. Why is there so much talk about religion and going to Heaven, if the greatest happiness to be attained is rest and enjoyment for our bodies? We are told that everything is there which can delight the sight, or the hearing, or the taste; but here on earth there are sweet sounds, and beautiful landscapes, and delicious fruits, yet we are not happy. Surely there is something more—something undefined and intangible in the world to come, or else religion is all a fable.”

“No, Tommy, no!” said Mr. Seton earnestly, and tears filled his eyes, “believe me it is not a cunningly devised fable. There is a blessed reality in it which we shall all experience for ourselves one day, if we continue faithful unto the end. And here how often is the true Christian confirmed in his belief, when he feels the divine love of Jesus filling his heart, and holds communion in prayer with the Author of

all good? One hour of such intercourse is more to the Christian than all this world can give, or all it has to take away. How much greater, then, will be our joy, when we are permitted to behold for ourselves the Saviour who has redeemed us with His blood, and ransomed us with His life; and when our enlightened and strengthened minds can fully comprehend the depth and magnitude of that love which prompted so great a sacrifice!"

"I see now," said Tommy thoughtfully; "it is this wonderful, unlimited love which will pervade every spirit assembled there, that will render the life in Heaven an endless joy."

"Yes," said Mr. Seton, "to know our sins forgiven, and meet our Saviour, not as an angry Judge, but as a forgiving Father, then, and then only, can we realize the fullness of His mercy and our pardon."

"What can we do for Him who has done so much for us?" Tommy asked.

"Yield ourselves a living sacrifice unto Him, for that is our reasonable service."

"But it seems so little. When we have done all we can do it seems but a small part of the duty we owe to God."

"That is an account we can never liquidate. We must ever be content to remain God's debtors."

* * * * *

In a distant city, a crowd is entering a lofty church, and as they take their seats many are the anxious eyes turned towards the vestry door—for a stranger has come among them, who is reported a Daniel in wisdom and eloquence. Every voice is hushed as the minister ascends the pulpit and stands before them, and every eye is fastened on him as he preaches unto them the glad tidings of joy.

He does not, like the unskilful physician, heal slightly the surface, crying, "Peace! peace! when there is no peace;" leaving the poison of sin to rankle and fester underneath; he probes the wound but to render the cure more effectual, and when every part is thoroughly purged, he pours in the balm of consolation. How earnestly he pleads the cause of his Master, sweetly telling them of all the Lord has done for him, and urging them with inspired tongue to repent ere it is too late, and not neglect so great salvation.

The sermon over, the crowd dispersed, and the minister was alone in the vestry, when a gentleman enters.

"You do not know me, Mr. Vincent?" the stranger asks.

"I cannot call you by name," the minister replies, as he takes the proffered hand in his.

"Have you forgotten the father of Bertha Eswald?"

"Forgotten her? Oh, no! I would certainly be an ingrate were I to forget my best friend. To her, under God, I owe all I am this day."

"It would be a proud and happy day for her, if she had lived to see it. She always had great hopes of her little friend Tommy, as she called you."

The young man's eyes glistened, and he replied in a voice tremulous with feeling,—
"Poor ignorant child I was when your daughter first saw me, and took compassion on me. I have been a brand plucked from the burning. Surely no one but she would have tried to penetrate the gross darkness of my mind."

"She despaired of no one, trusting in that Power which is able to save unto the uttermost," Mr. Eswald replied.

He walked to the lodgings of his young friend, and remained there an hour; and when he arose to depart, Mr. Vincent drew

aside a curtain, revealing a well-known picture to his friend.

“ You see I keep your daughter’s gift,” he said. “ It is one of my choicest treasures. Her death was my first, and almost my greatest sorrow. To my childish mind it seemed almost cruel, that a being so gentle and lovable should die.”

“ And I,” said the father, “ rebelled in my impious presumption against the decree of the All-wise, and would have detained her here at any cost. She was my idol, and with her I was too happy in the present to care for the future. It was in mercy, not in judgment, the blow was dealt ; it was taking the lamb that the sheep might follow, for though she is dead, yet her memory liveth.”

TORONTO :

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