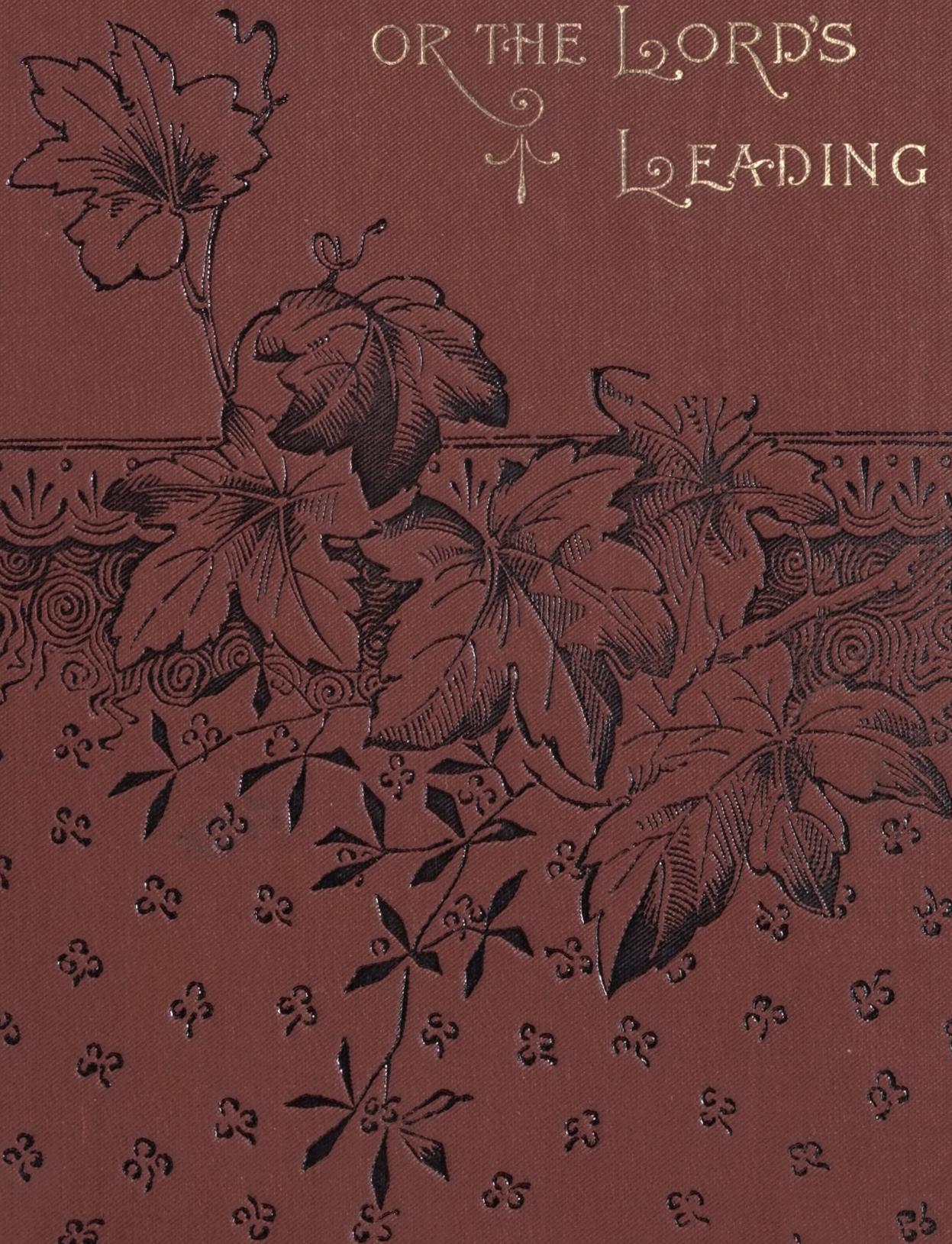


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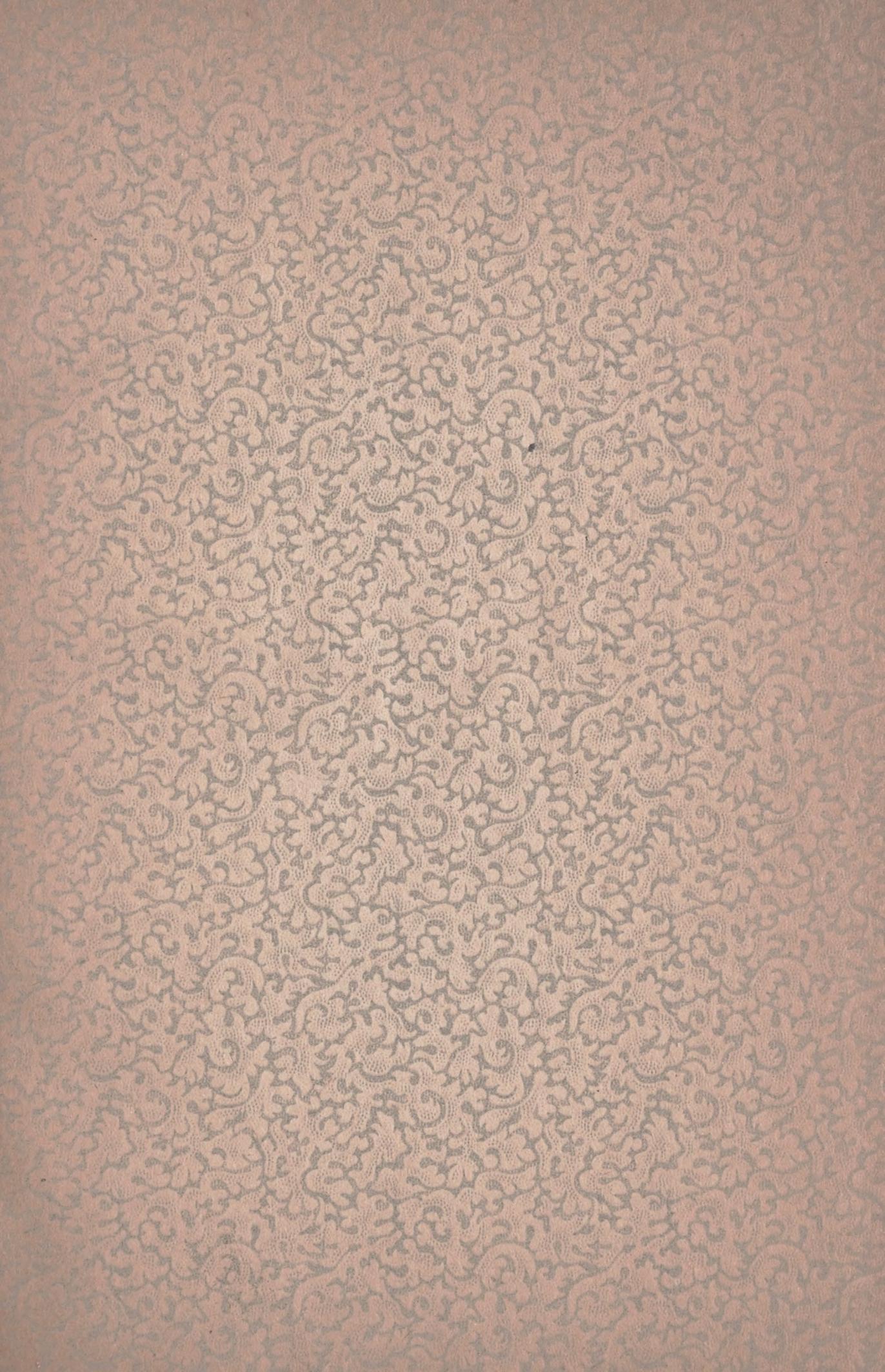


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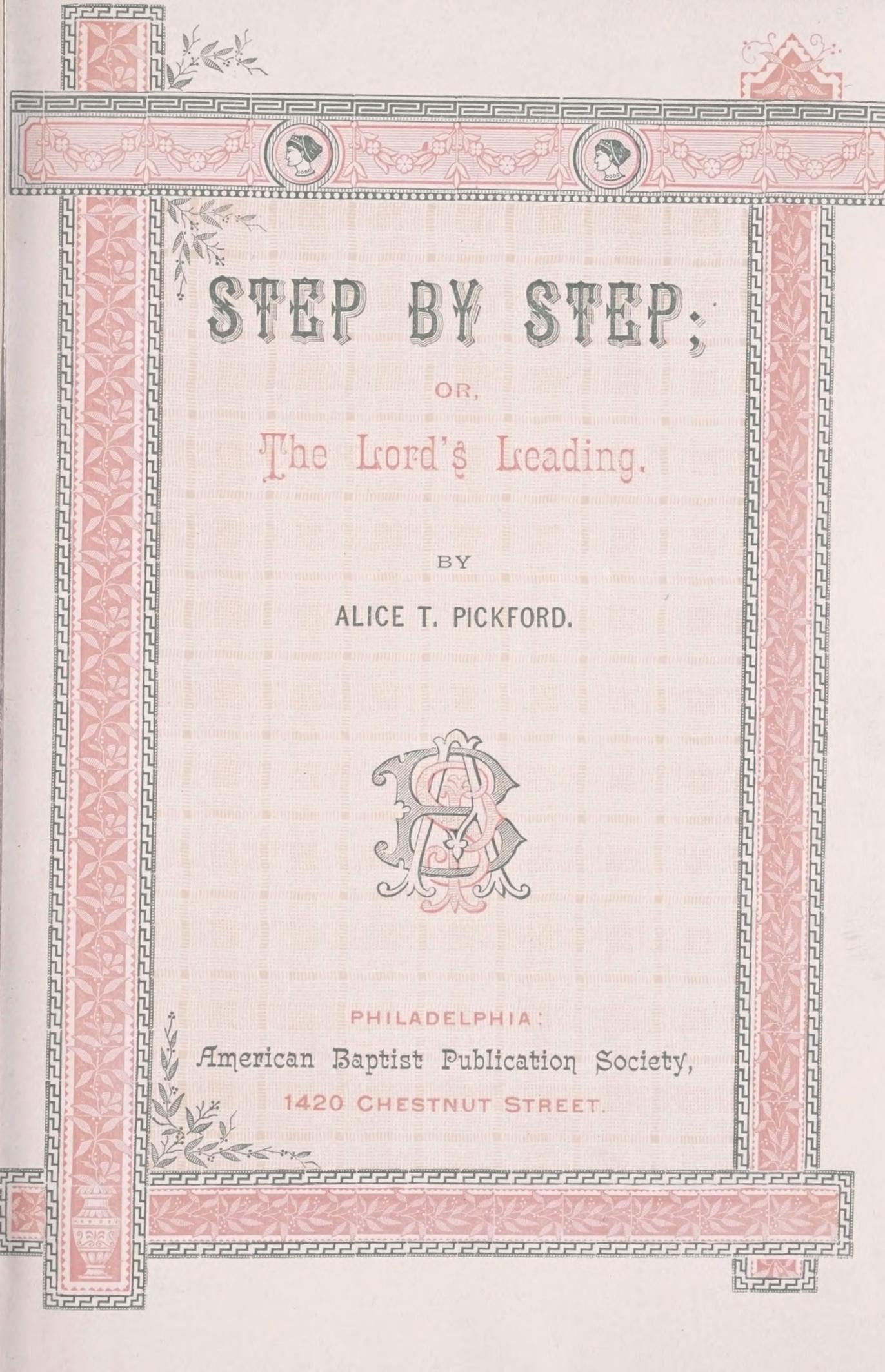
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Step by Step.



STEP BY STEP;

OR,

The Lord's Leading.

BY

ALICE T. PICKFORD.



PHILADELPHIA:



American Baptist Publication Society,

1420 CHESTNUT STREET.



STEP BY STEP:

OR,

THE LORD'S LEADING.

BY

ALICE T. PICKFORD.

“ Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters still, o'er troubled sea,
Still 'tis his hand that leadeth me.”



PHILADELPHIA :

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
1420 Chestnut Street.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
SORROWS,	5
CHAPTER II.	
NEW PLANS,	20
CHAPTER III.	
FIRST DAY AT THE SPRINGS,	33
CHAPTER IV.	
ENDURING,	49
CHAPTER V.	
A DAY OF REFRESHING,	59
CHAPTER VI.	
HOME AGAIN,	67
CHAPTER VII.	
DUTY,	74
CHAPTER VIII.	
AGNES AT EIGHTEEN,	80
CHAPTER IX.	
AGNES SAILS TO BERMUDA,	87
CHAPTER X.	
NEW SIGHTS,	99

	PAGE
CHAPTER XI.	
A BURDEN ON AGNES,	109
CHAPTER XII.	
OLD ACQUAINTANCES,	120
CHAPTER XIII.	
A CONFESSION,	128
CHAPTER XIV.	
OTHER DAYS,	134
CHAPTER XV.	
HERBERT'S DECISION,	143
CHAPTER XVI.	
A REVELATION,	149
CHAPTER XVII.	
TAKING LEAVE OF BERMUDA,	157
CHAPTER XVIII.	
AGNES AND HER SCHOLARS.	162
CHAPTER XIX.	
SURPRISES FOR AGNES,	172
CHAPTER XX.	
THE OUTCOME,	178
CHAPTER XXI.	
AN OPEN LETTER,	185
CHAPTER XXII.	
AGNES AND LOUISE IN CONTRAST,	189

STEP BY STEP.

CHAPTER I.

SORROW.

THE sun had just set, and the chill December day was drawing to a close. It was the hour which drags so heavily, when one has nothing very special to do; when work and books must be laid aside, and we often hear the remark, "I wish it were time for lights."

A lady was just taking her leave at the door of one of the nice-looking residences in a certain city; but could you have entered the house she had just left, you would have found anything but a cheerful aspect inside.

In the library an open fire was just dying, and the red embers were fast becoming black. On the rug before the fireplace lay a little girl of eleven years. She took no notice of the fire or any of her surroundings, but lay with her face buried in her hands, while sob after sob broke the stillness of the room.

Her grief was growing more and more violent, when a gentleman opened the door and quietly entered. Going

up to her as she lay on the floor, he raised her tenderly and placed her on the sofa in the further corner of the room. Her sobs continued, however, and she did not appear to notice her change of position.

“Agnes, my child,” said the gentleman at last, placing his hand on her hot forehead and smoothing back the tumbled hair, “what troubles you so?”

A sob louder than ever burst forth, and in a perfect storm of tears the child exclaimed: “I can’t bear her! I can’t bear her!”

“Cannot bear whom? What is the trouble?”

“Mrs. Carlton. She said my mamma was never going to get well. I don’t believe it; and I can’t bear her for saying such a thing.”

A shadow came across the gentleman’s face, and in a husky voice he said:

“You must not cry so, my child. You will disturb your mother, besides making yourself ill.”

“I can’t help it,” she sobbed. “It is not so; is it, papa?”

What could he say to her, when his own heart was almost breaking? How comfort another, when he so sorely needed comforting himself? But, feeling that something must be done, he lifted the child into his lap, and though scarcely able to command his voice, said:

“Agnes, be still and listen to me.”

The sobs grew somewhat quieter. But a low moan

every now and then, as well as the heaving breast, told that the tempest had not yet passed.

“My daughter,” he continued, “I want you to be a good, brave girl. If you cry so, mamma will hear you and be disturbed; and she has but just gone to sleep. Now tell me what Mrs. Carlton said to you.”

“She looked at me and said: ‘Poor child! Do you know how ill your mother is?’ I said I knew that mamma was sick, and had been for a long time; but that I thought she was getting better. Then she said: ‘Your mother can never be any better in this world.’ I told her I didn’t know how she knew, and that she had no right to speak so to me. And then I ran out of the room. I would not hear another word. She is a very unkind woman.”

Here the self-control was completely gone again; and her father could only clasp her in his arms and wait for the storm to pass. In the mean time his thoughts were with his sick wife, in the room above. He knew what the end must be. He had known it for some time, unwilling as he was to admit it even to himself. The hollow cough and dark eyes spoke to him plainer than words could speak, of the inevitable. Then his thoughts returned to his little girl, sobbing in his arms. He was sorry and almost provoked at first that the recent visitor had been so injudicious as to break the news to his child in such a way. Still, as he thought on, perhaps it was

better so. He could not have concealed the truth much longer. She must have known it soon. Why not now?

By this time the little girl was somewhat quieter, and her father again commenced to reason with her.

“Agnes, you know your dear mamma has been very ill, and at times has suffered intensely. Would you not be glad to think of her as well and strong again?”

“Oh, yes, papa,” came the eager answer.

“Then listen to me. If Jesus will make her so, should you be so very unhappy about it?”

“But I don’t want her to die. I want her to get well again without dying. Can’t Jesus do that, papa?” By this time her lips were quivering again.

For a moment there was silence in the room, broken only by the tick of the clock and the quick drawn breath of the child. It was only for a moment, however, and Mr. Rice was ready to speak.

“Do you remember last spring, when you were just getting well from diphtheria, and begged so hard to go out of doors, just for a little walk?”

“Yes, papa; and Dr. Stevens would not let me.”

“Why would he not let you?”

“It would not have been best. You see I might have taken cold and been sick again. Perhaps I might never have got well. Dr. Stevens knew better than I did.”

“Yes, my child. It would certainly have been the

worst possible thing for you, had he let you have your own way, would it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think the Lord is unkind, then, because, being able to look ahead and see the end from the beginning, he denies his children what he sees is not for their best good?"

"No, papa," came in a subdued voice.

"You are his child, you know, Aggie."

"I know it, and I really do love him."

"Then can you not trust him?"

Silence again for a few minutes, which was broken by the little girl.

"Why is it not best for mamma to get well?"

Mr. Rice almost caught his breath. Frail human nature had nearly caused him to ask the same question; but having fought the ground all over already, he was ready with an answer. It was simply this, however:

"I do not know. But my Heavenly Father does; and I can trust the Captain of my Salvation, who never made a mistake."

A little sigh was the only answer to this, and then Agnes lay quiet in her father's arms. A long time he held her there. Whether she were asleep or not, he could not tell; but her eyes were closed, and she was quiet. At last he rose and placed her carefully on the sofa. Then he walked over to the grate, mended the fire

so that the blaze sent a cheerful light flickering through the whole room. Going back to the sofa, he saw that she had not moved; so noiselessly he left the room.

When the door had closed, Agnes rose from the sofa, and, kneeling by its side, buried her face in the pillow. For a moment she was silent. Then she said :

“Dear Lord, I need thy help very, *very* much, or I cannot be willing to give up my precious mamma. Thou hast said thou wilt help us when we are in trouble. Please help me, and make me willing to say, ‘Thy will be done,’ for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

The tears were flowing again by the time she had finished her petition; but the bitterness that had characterized her first grief was all gone. These tears were like the last drops of a shower, when the sun has already broken through the clouds; and she felt quieter after they were over. How long she knelt there, she could not have told. She thought not of time, or how it was passing. She had gone through a hard struggle—one such as few children of her age are called upon to pass through; but she had come off conqueror through him that loved her. She did not doubt but that the Lord would do right.

Suddenly, however, there came to her mind a Bible verse that she had read only that morning: “All things work together *for good* to them that love God.” Was it possible that this was really to be for her

good? She had only thought of it as something she must bear because it was God's will; the thought that it was in some way for her good had not entered her mind. She knew the meaning of the last part of the verse—"Them that love God." That meant her surely. She had never doubted that fact since she gave herself to him the summer before. She made the surrender then for time and eternity, and she had confessed him before the world. So here was a promise to her; just as much to her as though it had read, "Agnes Rice." It *must be* one of the "all things." She loved her mother as few girls of her age are capable of loving any one: but she loved her Saviour more. If it were his will—if he saw best for it to be so—she would trust him.

The victory was complete now. She rose from her knees and went out into the dining room. Tea was over, but her father had ordered hers to be kept until she should want it. The servant eyed her critically while she was eating. The meal was taken mechanically, yet she was perfectly calm. When she had finished and the door closed on her, Jane said, half aloud:

"That child is a perfect riddle to me. A couple of hours ago she was crying and taking on at a great rate in the library, and now she comes out and eats her supper without a word or a tear. She's a peculiar child, *sure*. How some folks can rave so one minute, and be calm as a mill pond the next, I don't see, nor never could."

Poor soul! She knew nothing of the help Agnes had sought and found—knew not what it meant to have a Saviour to help in time of need.

Agnes went directly to her room when she had finished her supper; and though sadder than ever before in her life, she could say amid it all: "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, being exhausted by her long struggle, she soon fell asleep.

The days that followed might be said to be simply days of waiting. Although tears might flow, and hearts be near breaking, when the messenger of death really came, the fiercest struggle was already past, and father and daughter simply sat with folded hands, as it were, and awaited the inevitable. They thought little, cared little about the outside world. Agnes heard not the comments that her first violent grief had called forth. Some people were free with their opinions on the subject. Said one of the elder sisters in the church:

"It's simply dreadful, the way Agnes Rice takes on about her mother. They say she is perfectly uncontrollable. Mrs. Carlton said it was shocking, the way she spoke to her, and then rushed out of the room just like a mad child."

"Well," remarked another, "I think she should be labored with. Some one should tell her how dreadfully wicked it is for her to do so."

“But,” said another sister, “I think you have not heard about her lately. They tell me that, after that first outbreak of grief, she became very calm, and that it is really wonderful the way she bears up now.”

“Well, I am sure I hope it’s all right,” said the third speaker. “I should hate to think one of our deacons had a rebellious daughter.”

But with all their remarks, no one ventured any advice to Agnes. She was in blissful ignorance of their criticism.

The days wore slowly away. One seemed very much like another. The doctor came and went, although he felt his own inability to do anything. The patient grew weaker and weaker, with occasionally a day when she seemed a little brighter.

On one of these occasions Agnes was in her mother’s room. She had sat in silence for some time, thinking her mother was asleep. On hearing her name called, however, she rose and went to the bedside.

Mrs. Rice was leaning back among the pillows, in the position that was easiest for her. She took her little daughter’s hand in her own, and, kissing it tenderly, said:

“Does my little girl think she could sing for mamma?”

For a moment Agnes hesitated. It was a hard thing her mother had asked of her. Although possessing a remarkably fine voice for one so young, she felt it to be almost an impossibility to use it then. But, feeling that

it might be the last time her mother would ever ask the favor of her, she offered up a silent prayer for help, and asked :

“What shall I sing, mamma?”

“Can you sing ‘Over Jordan,’ darling?”

In a trembling voice Agnes began her mother’s favorite hymn :

“With his dear and loving care,
Will the Saviour lead me on,
To the hills and valleys fair,
Over Jordan?

Yes; we’ll rest our weary feet
By the crystal waters sweet,
When the peaceful shore we greet,
Over Jordan.”

It was hard for her to get through the first stanza; but after that she nearly regained her self-composure, and the rest of it was easier. At length, with clear and sweet voice, she finished the last stanza :

“In the Promised Land to be,
Will the Saviour lead us on,
Till fair Canaan’s shore we see,
Over Jordan?

Yes; to dwell with thee, at last,
Guide and lead us as thou hast,
Till the parted wave be passed,
Over Jordan.”

Mrs. Rice lay with her eyes closed during the singing, and, as Agnes finished, a smile stole over her pale face.

“Do you know, Aggie,” she said, opening her eyes, “that is just what the Saviour has promised to do? ‘Guide and lead us,’ even unto the end. ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.’ You know who said that, my child.”

“Yes, mamma.”

“He never has left me, and I know he will not at the last. God is good. Will you read me the ninety-first Psalm?”

Silently Agnes rose and brought her mother’s Bible. Opening it at the place designated, she began: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

This was evidently a favorite Psalm with Mrs. Rice, and one that was well marked in her Bible; especially the fifteenth verse, which had every word underscored in pencil:

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”

There was silence in the room for some time after Agnes had finished reading. Then she asked her mother if she should not bathe her head. As Mrs. Rice assented, she brought the bottle of Florida water, and, stroking

back the dark, wavy hair, she began to bathe her forehead.

“Sing to me again, Agnes,” said the sick woman.
“Sing anything you like this time.”

The hymn that suggested itself to her mind just then was one that had been sung at Sunday-school the Sunday previous. So she sang that.

“Closer, Lord, to thee I cling,
Closer still to thee ;
Safe beneath thy sheltering wing,
I would ever be.
Rude the blast of doubt and sin,
Fierce assaults without, within,
Help me, Lord, the battle win,—
Closer, Lord, to thee.

“Closer yet, O Lord, my Rock,
Refuge of my soul ;
Dread I not the tempest shock,
Tho’ the billows roll.
Wildest storm cannot alarm,
For to me can come no harm,
Leaning on thy loving arm,—
Closer, Lord, to thee.

“Closer still, my Help, my Stay,
Closer, closer still ;
Meekly, there I learn to say :
‘Father, not my will.’
Learn that in affliction’s hour,
When the clouds of sorrow lower,
Love directs thy hand of power,—
Closer, Lord, to thee.

“ Closer, Lord, to thee I come,
Light of life divine;
Thro' the ever blessed Son,
Joy and peace are mine.
Let me in thy love abide,
Keep me ever near thy side,
In the ' Rock of Ages ' hide,—
Closer, Lord, to thee.”

Mrs. Rice lay very quiet, and Agnes could not tell whether she were asleep or not. She sat by the bedside for some time, watching her mother. How pale and thin she looked! The child's eyes filled with tears as she thought of the contrast between her mother of a year ago, and her mother at the present time. Her father came in presently, and Agnes rose and left the room.

About an hour later there was a hurrying through the house. The child started up anxiously. Should she go to her mother's room or not? She hesitated, then went up stairs, and with a very pale little face, opened the chamber door. Her mother had had one of her severe coughing spells, and was now resting in her husband's arms, as he sat on the side of the bed. The nurse was fanning her, while Mr. Rice bathed her temples. Poor Agnes had never seen her look so badly before. She stood a moment, and then rushed from the room; but for hours after she could see her mother's pale face, as she lay back then, gasping for breath.

Hardly knowing what to do with herself, Agnes went

to her room, and, taking up her little Bible, sat down by the window. Oh, how she needed comfort! She opened the book at the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. It had always been a favorite chapter with her; but never before had she realized its full meaning. The first verse her eye lighted on was: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." She glanced at the marginal reading—a thing that she seldom did—and found that it gave the word "orphans." So it might read: "I will not leave you *orphans*." How exceedingly precious this was to her just now! She realized a little, she thought, how the disciples felt when the Saviour was about to leave them. How very lonely and sad they must have been, and how beautiful this promise given to them by Jesus himself! And did he not make it to his children now? She believed he did. Then how sweet the verse: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

She closed the book. She had enough. The comfort she so craved had come.

The day wore slowly away. She heard them coming and going with things for her mother. Once, when her father went down stairs for a few moments, she timidly approached him, and slipping her hand into his, asked how her mother was. Mr. Rice looked worn and sad. He merely said:

“Your mother does not know any one just now,” and quietly returned to the room above.

Agnes wondered if she could ever go to sleep that night; but sleep came at last. When she woke the next morning, she lay very still, and listened to hear any sound from her mother's room; but all being quiet, she rose and dressed. On going to the dining room, she found that her father was not there; and as the servant entered just then, she inquired of her where her father was. A shake of the head and an unintelligible answer were all the reply she received; so, leaving the room, she entered the library. Her father was here, seated in an arm chair, with his head buried in his hands.

Timidly she approached him, and, laying her hand on his shoulder, said:

“Is mamma worse, papa?”

A groan escaped his lips, and taking his child in his arms he said, while the tears streamed down his face:

“Your mother is in glory.”

“Oh, papa!” cried the little girl. “And didn't she know you before—before she died?”

“Yes, my child. Just before she breathed her last, she opened her eyes and said: ‘It is all right; I am ready.’”

Nothing more was said by father or daughter. And when the servant finally came to summon them to the long-neglected breakfast, she found them clasped in each other's arms, sobbing together.

CHAPTER II.

NEW PLANS.

THE days and months followed each other in quick succession; all that was mortal of Mrs. Rice had been laid away to await the resurrection, when the trump of God should sound and the dead in Christ arise. The snows of winter had fallen on the new-made grave; the spring had come, melting ice and snow, and bringing the early flowers. These in turn had passed away, and the month of roses had arrived. Time, the great healer, was in a measure dispelling the gloom that had gathered over the household, and although Agnes held the memory of her mother as a most sweet and sacred thing still, yet she was nevertheless getting used to what she could not help.

One day, Mr. Rice called his little daughter into the room where he was sitting. Her father had just had a gentleman call to see him on business, which, indeed, was not an unfrequent occurrence, and the child obeyed the summons with no thought of there being any special cause for the rather protracted stay of the stranger who had just taken his departure.

Her father did not appear to notice her entrance until she said :

“Did you call me, papa?”

Then he rose and placed a chair for her near his own, saying, as he did so:

“Yes, Agnes; I wish to see you about some plans I have been turning over in my mind. Do you know that gentleman who has just been here?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, it is a Mr. Erskine, from London. He called to see me on a matter of business, and I find I shall be obliged to go to England for a few weeks.”

“Oh, papa! how soon?”

“I must start next week.”

“And shall I stay here with Aunt Ellen?”

This was a sister of Mr. Rice’s who had kept house for him since his wife’s death.

“No. That is one thing I wished to speak to you about. I cannot take you with me, as I shall have no time for anything but business, neither do I think it best to leave you at home. You have heard me speak of my cousin, Lucy Chapman.”

“Yes, papa.”

“You have never seen her though, I think. Well, she is going into the country with her two children—Louise, who is about your own age, I believe, and Herbert, about two years older. She has kindly consented to take you also. I wrote to her some days ago about it, as I expected then to be called away, but thought better not to say

anything to you about it until I heard from her, which I did this morning. I think it a very good plan, for you certainly need young companions, my child."

"When will she go, papa?" came in a faint voice.

"She passes through this city next Tuesday on her way to the Springs. I told her I would see to it that you were on hand when the train arrived."

Mr. Rice paused, but as Agnes made no reply, he continued:

"How do you think you shall like going to the Springs?"

"I should like it very much if you were going; but"—and there was a slight tremor in her voice—"I do not know Cousin Lucy at all, nor Cousin Louise, nor Herbert."

"You will soon get acquainted, however. They are pleasant people, but a trifle gay."

"How long will you be gone, papa?"

"I do not expect to be away from home longer than six weeks. That will soon pass, you know."

But by the looks of the little girl one could easily have imagined that to her six weeks was no very short time to be separated from her father. She bore it well, however, and when her father suggested that there might be some shopping to be done in the few days that remained before her departure, she answered him with one of her sweetest smiles. She did not think she needed anything;

but Mr. Rice's opinion on the subject was evidently different from hers. So after dinner she set out, in company with her Aunt Ellen, to purchase the things her father desired her to have.

For awhile all else was forgotten. What child is there who would not be charmed with the brilliant display of the large dry goods stores, especially when they are on a shopping expedition for things for themselves?

Store after store was visited, one article after another tied up and directed to be sent to Mr. Rice's residence. Then the pleasure of undoing those same parcels a little later! One shade was contrasted with another, and Agnes, child like, almost forgot the occasion of the purchases, and for a time thought principally of the articles themselves.

She had not been put into black at her mother's death. Mr. Rice objected. It might be well enough for older people, he said, but no child of his should be dressed in such a gloomy fashion. So the articles bought that day were becoming in color as well as in make.

Then followed a few more busy days. Sewing, packing, and farewells occupied the time well, and when Tuesday came, it found Agnes in readiness for her journey. It would take several hours, as she left home about the middle of the forenoon, and they were not due at the Springs until four in the afternoon. The last five miles were to be made by stage, and as Agnes had never trav-

eled in that way before, it was a novel and pleasant feature of the journey to her.

Mr. Rice went with her to the station, and everything that could possibly increase her comfort in traveling was done. But when the train rushed into the station, he had only time to give her a hurried introduction to his cousin and her children, imprint a kiss on her lips and cheek, and with a "Good-bye" and "God bless my darling," step upon the platform just as the conductor waved his hand as a signal to the engineer, and the train started slowly on its way.

For a long time Agnes sat gazing out of the car window, just as her father had left her. Her eyes filled with tears, but she would let them go no further. She had but little idea how Mrs. Chapman or either of her children looked. Indeed, she was not thinking of them at all, but of her father, with whom she had just parted, and whom she would not see again for six long weeks, and of her dear mother, whose grave she had visited the evening before. She seemed to see it now, the sun lighting up the white marble. She had read its inscription over and over, until she knew it as well as she did her own name.

ALICE L. RICE,
WIFE OF FRANK J. RICE,
DIED DECEMBER 2, 18—,
AGED 37 YEARS.

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep,
From which none ever wake to weep."

Her eyes filled again. She felt she was leaving all that was dear to her so far behind. But no! She suddenly remembered: "Lo I am with you alway." Who spoke those words? Her very dearest and best Friend was going with her, after all.

She was suddenly started from her reverie by Mrs. Chapman laying her hand on her shoulder and speaking her name. She turned round, and for the first time looked that lady squarely in the face. It was a pleasant face, but even to the child's inexperienced gaze it seemed to lack something, firmness or character, or something she could not really define. The lady seemed a little embarrassed, but finally said:

"I hope you will spend a very happy vacation with your cousins, my dear."

"Thank you, ma'am," was the reply.

"I trust," resumed Mrs. Chapman, "that you will not make yourself unhappy about being separated from your father for a short time. You are in good hands, you must remember."

"Yes, ma'am."

The lady stopped, as though at a loss to proceed, but finally went on:

"Your cousins here, Herbert and Louise, are delighted with the prospect of spending six weeks at the Springs. It is a charming place. I believe you never have been there."

“No, ma’am ; never.”

“You will like the place, though, I am sure. And you must get acquainted with your cousins as fast as possible. I believe you are about Louise’s age. Let me see. How old did your father tell me you were?”

“Twelve, ma’am. Twelve, last March.”

“Oh ! you are quite near Louise’s age. She was twelve in January. I feel sure you will soon be very good friends.”

Not seeming to be able to think of anything further to say, Mrs. Chapman settled back in her chair and resumed the book she had been reading. Then, for the first time, Agnes took a good look at the two younger members of the party. They were both very good looking, and bore some resemblance to their mother. The boy, however, was the finer looking of the two—his face seeming to show more strength of character than that of his sister, or even of his mother. His hair was dark, and a trifle curly ; while his eyes were certainly very handsome, being large, gray, and thoughtful, at the same time expressing good nature and fun. Not liking to look at her cousins too long, lest she should seem to be rude, she turned her attention again to the window. For a time she was interested in the scenery ; then her thoughts returned again to her father, who was to sail that afternoon. She had never been separated from either of her parents for any length of time until her mother’s death ; and

since then had been her father's almost constant companion. Now she was with strangers—just as much strangers to her, in one sense, as though they were *not* second cousins. However, this would not do. She must try and be cheerful. So she fell to wondering what kind of a place the Springs might be. The Chapmans had been there before. She would venture to ask them. Turning to Louise, she asked her about the place.

“Oh! it is a lovely place,” was the enthusiastic reply. “Perfectly splendid. Then there are always such nice people there; that is the best part of it. The Van Alstons go every year, and the Lawrences. They are immensely wealthy, you know. What! don't know the Lawrences or the Van Alstons? Well, that is strange. You must have heard of them—they are so celebrated. Then they have magnificent hops every Saturday evening. I suppose you dance.”

Being answered in the negative, she raised her eyebrows in surprise.

“Possible! Well, I advise you to learn right off. It is so fascinating.”

Not knowing just what reply to make, Agnes remained silent. Evidently her cousin was not a Christian. She was sorry for that; but she decided then and there that she must let her light shine all the brighter, if it was to shine in the dark. Seeing the porter coming through the

car with something in his hand which he handed to the passengers, she asked her cousin what it was.

“Why, that’s the porter,” was the reply; “and he is showing the bill of fare for dinner. I am glad, too; I’m so hungry. It always does make me hungry to travel. The people give him their orders now, you know, and then he brings the things whenever they want them. Haven’t you ever been in a parlor car before, Cousin Agnes?”

“No, I never rode very far in the cars. Only a little way at a time.”

“Well, here is the porter, to see what we want. I’m hungry as I can be,”—this last remark addressed to her mother,—“and I want something good.”

Mrs. Chapman took the bill of fare in her hand, looked it over, ordered something for herself and children, and then asked Agnes what she would like.

“It makes no difference. I’ll take the same as you all have,” was the answer.

So lunch was ordered for the four, to be served in half an hour.

The way it was served was all new to Agnes, from the little table that was fitted to the side of the car to the electric bell Mrs. Chapman rang when she wished the waiter. Everything seemed nice to her; but she observed—as indeed she had occasion to do many times during the summer—that Louise was hard to suit. The

soup was too hot, the vegetables too cold, and the dessert not prepared the way she liked it at all. Her mother took very little notice of her fault-finding; and Herbert remarked that he had hoped she would forget to grumble for once.

Lunch was finished, however, and they had just time to collect their wraps and satchels, when they were obliged to leave the car. They waited a short time in the station, and then took another train for the remaining twenty-five miles by rail. During all the time that they were in the car, Louise fussed and scolded because they were unable to secure seats in a parlor car.

They found the stage waiting when they arrived at the station. Agnes was in an ecstasy of delight.

"Oh! Cousin Louise," she exclaimed, "how nice! I never rode in a stage like that."

"Never rode in a stage like that!" was the rather disdainful rejoinder. "I wonder where you were brought up?"

"Where she learned manners, anyway, I presume," observed Herbert.

Agnes grew very quiet after this, thinking she would not venture to say much, lest she should start an unpleasant discussion.

"I'm bound I will ride on top of that stage," said Louise. And although her mother, who was very nervous, remonstrated with her, she finally carried her point,

as Herbert informed his cousin she generally did, and was mounted in triumph on the seat by the driver; while Mrs. Chapman fidgeted during the whole ride, and continually charged her to be careful. Agnes rode inside with that lady, although she would much rather have been up with her cousins; especially as Mrs. Chapman occupied a good part of the ride in retailing accounts of "Louise's persistency," as she called it, and the trouble it had caused her. However, the ride could not but be a pleasant one to Agnes. It was through the woods nearly all the way; and they were the most beautiful woods she had ever seen. The sunlight streamed through the trees, making the soft, damp moss look like a beautiful carpet of green and gold. The air too was sweet, and the little birds so charming, that she felt as though she had never enjoyed a ride better; and she almost wished it were ten miles instead of five. They came to the end, however, and she found herself at the steps of a very large and handsome hotel. It was white, with a tower and upper and lower verandas running nearly the whole distance around it.

A porter helped them to alight, took their hand baggage, and led the way into the office. Then followed a few words with the clerk, who handed the porter some keys. He, motioning them to follow, made his way to the elevator; and soon they were in some very airy and pleasant rooms.

“I thought you would prefer to room with Louise,” remarked Mrs. Chapman to Agnes, “as you might be lonesome if left to yourself in a strange hotel.”

Agnes thanked her, with a secret wish, however, that she might have had a room to herself; which wish grew as time advanced.

After tea, both girls were busy for a time taking things from their trunks. Then Agnes took her Bible and sat down to read. Her roommate did not observe her at first, being occupied in her own affairs. Presently, however, glancing over to where Agnes sat, absorbed in her reading, she remarked that it was rather late to go to reading. She herself was almost tired to death, and was going right to bed. But when Agnes rose, put her Bible on the stand, and knelt down by the side of the bed, the astonishment of the child seemed to reach its height; and the little girl kneeling there, with her face buried in the counterpane, could not help feeling that a pair of very inquisitive eyes were gazing at her.

As she rose from her knees, she saw her roommate standing looking at her in a sort of amazed wonder, and was greeted with the words:

“I did not know you were one of the *pious* sort.”

Poor Agnes! Her cheeks crimsoned. She made no reply, however, but hastily undressed and got into bed, her companion soon following. But long after sleep had closed the eyes of those around her, she lay sobbing and

crying. Oh! if only she need not have left her father, and gone away with strangers! She thought of him now, on the wide ocean, every moment making the distance between them greater; of the dangers to which he was exposed; and the time that must elapse before she could see him again, even if no accident befell him. Timidly, lest she should waken her cousin, she slipped out of bed, and quietly made her way over to the window; and the moon, which was shining in all her grandeur, lighted the little figure clad in white, as she knelt by the window-sill. Her sobs grew quieter, and she prayed—oh, so earnestly—that her dear papa might be kept from all harm, and that she might be patient, come what would. Calmed at last by the sweet communion with her best Friend, she rose and went back to bed. Tired with her long journey, and fatigued by grief, she also soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST DAY AT THE SPRINGS.

WHEN Agnes opened her eyes the next morning, the sun was shining brightly, and she saw her cousin standing at the window. Jumping out of bed, she ran across the room and stood beside her; pushing the shutters still further back, she uttered one exclamation, and then stood as if spellbound.

“What in the world is the matter?” said Louise.

“Oh, isn’t it beautiful! I never saw such dear, lovely mountains before. Aren’t they grand?”

“How funny you are!” said the other. “Who ever thought of calling mountains ‘dear’ before?”

“Oh, but they are so splendid!” said the little girl, with a sigh of satisfaction. “Don’t you think so, Cousin Louise?”

“Why, yes, they are pretty enough, I suppose. I never spent much time in looking at them.”

“Never looked at them much, and you have been here before?”

“Yes, twice.”

“And not looked at the mountains much? Oh, it seems to me I should never tire of looking at them!”

“You would, though, and you had better hurry and dress or you will be late to breakfast. I am going down to the veranda now.”

Agnes was not sorry to be left to herself. Turning regretfully from the window, she began to dress. When this was accomplished, she took her little Bible and sat down by the window. She would have liked to go down on the veranda herself, but she felt the moments she had alone were precious. She opened her Bible at the ninetyeth psalm and began to read :

“Lord, thou has been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

She paused ; never before had she so fully realized how much was implied by this psalm. “Before the mountains were brought forth ;” how long ago that seemed ! She turned her gaze out of the window ; those grand, majestic mountains that looked as though they had always been there were formed by One who inhabited eternity. *He* was before they were. *He would be* after they had passed away. For the mountains should depart and the hills be removed, but his kindness should be forever. She fell to wondering what else the Bible said about mountains. She recalled a verse somewhere in the Psalms that said : “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ;” and looking at them, she felt what a great thing God’s right-

eousness was. She remembered how Christ went up into a mountain when he taught his disciples the beatitudes, and again how he took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain and was transfigured before them. She did not recall anything else just then that the Bible said about mountains, although she knew they must be spoken of many more times. She closed the book and knelt down. She thanked God for allowing her to see the grandeur of his creation, and prayed that she might let her light shine for him at all times.

Just as she reached the veranda, the breakfast bell sounded. Louise met her at the door. She had already found friends, with whom she was chatting gayly. She introduced them to her cousin, at the same time asking her what she had been about so long.

“You must have prinked considerable, Cousin Agnes,” she said. “We have been down to the spring and had a delicious drink of the water.”

Mrs. Chapman coming down the stairs just then, they all went into breakfast.

After that meal was finished, the girls went down to the spring again, Agnes accompanying them this time. It was just a pleasant distance, being about a quarter of a mile, with plank walk all the way from the hotel steps to the spring house. How delicious the water was! It was not a mineral spring; indeed, one of its peculiarities was the absence of any special mineral. It was pure and

sparkling as crystal, and as Agnes drank a glass just dipped from the bubbling basin, she thought she had never tasted any water half as nice before. Other people seemed to appreciate it too, for they came one after another, so that the boy employed to dip the water had plenty to do.

“Not much like city water,” observed one gentleman, draining his fourth glass.

“No, not much,” replied his friend; “this is the pure stuff. It does not look like the home water, as though saffron had been steeped in it.”

Every one seemed in good spirits; even those who had come for their health seemed to imbibe cheerfulness as well as water.

The girls slowly retraced their steps to the hotel—slowly, because of the up grade, down which they had hurried on their way to the spring. The time seemed to pass far more pleasantly than Agnes had at first feared it would; although the hotel might be said to stand there alone, with the exception of a few country houses. No one seemed to feel lonely, and there were enough to make time pass pleasantly.

One day, Agnes and her two cousins took a walk through the woods to the shore of a beautiful lake. The child was in an ecstasy of delight. After reaching the spring house, they took a path leading directly into the woods. The sweet smell of leaves and ferns; the twitter

of birds in the branches overhead ; and the little path which wound round and round and up and down, and across which a tiny spring of water occasionally made its way,—were something altogether new to her. There was but one drawback to the pleasure of the walk—that was the mosquitoes ; the woods were full of them, but Agnes declared she would keep on if they were twice as troublesome, and Herbert remarked that there was “no rose without a thorn,” and although the thorn in this instance was quite painful, he thought he could stand it for the sake of the rose. Even Louise, who was generally apt to look at the uncomfortable side of things, while she found some fault as she slapped at the mosquitoes and said she did not see what they were made for, anyway, concluded that, on the whole, it paid. When they reached the shore of the lake, there was another exclamation on the part of Agnes, who said she never saw anything so pretty before, excepting the mountain. Finding there were boats to let, Herbert proposed that they take a row, to which proposition the girls readily assented ; and to make the pleasure still more complete, they were enabled to carry back to the hotel some very pretty water lilies.

So one day after another passed away until Saturday night arrived. As the two girls left the tea table that evening, Louise asked her cousin what she was going to wear.

“Wear,” repeated Agnes. “Wear when?”

“Why, this evening, to be sure. Have you forgotten the Saturday night hop?”

“Oh, to be sure, I had forgotten; but you know I do not dance.”

“I know that, but it does not hinder your looking on. A great many of the people who go down do not dance, but only go to see. Wouldn't you like to see them dance?”

“I don't know,” replied the little girl, thoughtfully. “I had not thought anything about it. I never saw any dancing.”

“Never saw dancing? Well, then, I'm sure I think you had better go down and see some. It can't hurt you to look on, even if you are too religious to dance yourself.”

The child hesitated. Ought she to go? Could there be any harm in just looking on as her cousin had suggested? She would really like to see what it was like.

“Come,” rejoined the other, “what will you wear? I shall wear my new pink silk. Mamma bought it for me just before we left home. I always was crazy for a pink silk. I don't get a chance to dance much, however; I am so young that hardly any one asks me. I think it's horrid to be young and have every one look down on you. Well, what did you decide to wear finally?”

“I think I will wear white,” she said, slowly, as though

measuring every word, "my white embroidered dress and blue sash and ribbons."

Louise was a long time in dressing. She tried one effect after another as she stood before the mirror.

"Are not my gloves immaculate?" she asked, after she had worked hard for five or ten minutes getting them on. "I do so admire nice kids."

But for all her fussing and prinking, Agnes looked the more simple and childish, and consequently the prettier, as they entered the hall together.

They took seats on one side of the room, and while they waited for them to commence, Agnes occupied herself by looking at the people as they came in. She had never seen such display of dress before. Silks, satins, brocades, laces, and diamonds passed before her, and to the child, who although reared in luxury had spent her twelve short years in simplicity, it seemed almost like fairy land.

"There! they are going to begin now," presently announced Louise. "I do hope some one will ask me to dance this evening. I want to show my new dress. There's Miss Van Alsten, Cousin Agnes—that young lady with pink roses. That gentleman is inviting her to dance. I wonder who he is? I never saw him before that I know of."

Just then the music began; the orchestra struck up a lively waltz and the dancers took the floor.

Agnes sat and held her breath at first, hardly knowing what to think, as one couple after another whirled past her. She felt shocked, however, at what she saw; and touching her cousin on the arm, said:

“Cousin Louise, do they—I mean, does the gentleman *always* hug the lady like that?”

She spoke under her breath, but her cousin broke into a laugh as loud as she would dare indulge in, in such a place.

“Of course they do, goosey,” she replied. “Didn’t you know that before?”

“No, never,” said the little girl. “Are they very well acquainted with each other?”

“Some are and some are not. Some of them, probably, never met before.”

A look of horror came across the child’s face.

“But how do they know, then, that they are nice, good people?”

“I don’t suppose they do. Probably a good many of them are not.”

“And yet they let them do so!”

The look of horror had deepened now.

“Why, yes,” replied the other, with a little, annoyed laugh. “What’s the harm? It’s just dancing, you know.”

Agnes seemed to have no reply ready for such a question.

“Don’t, for pity sake, look so,” said the other. “What will folks think of you? They are going to have some square dances soon; perhaps you’ll like them better.”

“Square dances! What are they?”

“They have no hugging, as you call it, in those.”

“Then I think they should have *all* square dances.”

In a few moments more the music ceased, and the dancers threw themselves down to rest. There was a short interval, and then the sets were formed for the quadrilles. Herbert invited Agnes to dance, but she quietly replied that she did not dance at all, while Louise turned to her brother and said, in a loud whisper:

“She’s one of the pious kind.”

Agnes’ cheeks grew crimson, but she said nothing. Herbert, evidently ashamed of his sister’s rudeness, said:

“If you’ll allow me, then, I will sit here and watch the next myself. I do not care much for dancing.”

Louise was in an unhappy frame of mind.

“Herbert,” she said at last, in a petulant tone, “can’t you get me an introduction to some of those young gentlemen? I want to dance, and perhaps they would ask me if you would only introduce me.”

“If they care to dance with you, then let them ask for an introduction themselves. I’m not going to beg them to dance with any sister of mine.”

Louise pouted. “That is just the way he does,” she remarked to Agnes. “He never gives me half a chance

to get acquainted. Oh! they are going to have a Portland Fancy. It is the nicest *square* dance there is, I think. I wish some one would ask me to dance in that."

Just at this juncture, Herbert, who had been across the room, returned with a young lad a trifle older than himself. Going up to his cousin, he said:

"Cousin Agnes, Mr. French has asked for an introduction to you. Mr. French, this is my cousin, Miss Agnes Rice."

The lad bowed in a constrained dancing-school fashion, expressed great pleasure at making Miss Agnes' acquaintance, and asked if she would favor him in the next dance. Agnes thanked him; but informed him that she did not dance. He was not to be so easily disposed of, however. He was not *much* of a dancer himself, he said; but then he knew she would pardon it. Would she not just try this Portland Fancy with him?

Agnes was not used to having her word doubted. Always truthful herself, she supposed every one else to be the same. Looking up into his face with her clear, honest eyes, she replied, with a quiet dignity:

"I think you misunderstood me. I said I did not dance at all."

At this he turned abruptly to Herbert, begging he would introduce him to his sister. The introduction was given, and then Louise had her heart's desire—a chance to form one of the set for the Portland Fancy.

Herbert resumed his seat by his cousin's side. "You do not think much of that fellow," he said.

"I did not like his appearance very well."

"He's a bore! That's just what he is. I hope Louise will get enough of him. I did not want to introduce him to you; but he asked me to, and although I assured him you never danced, he said let him alone for that. Some girls needed a little more urging than others, that was all."

"If he thinks I am one of that kind," said Agnes, "I do not care to know any more of him."

"I knew he was mistaken this time; but I thought I would let him find out for himself. You took him down a peg; and I for one am heartily glad of it."

The dance ended, and Louise came back flushed with excitement, saying she had had a perfectly splendid time, and that Mr. French was quite entertaining.

Mrs. Chapman came along just then, and announced that it was high time the girls retired. Louise fretted, teased, and pouted; but to no avail. For once Mrs. Chapman stood firm. So, with reluctant steps on the part of Louise and eager ones on the part of Agnes, who was glad of any available excuse to make her escape, they left the hall.

Louise was moody and disagreeable while she undressed, remarking that her mother always did just that way. Whenever she was really enjoying herself, she had to be sent to bed like a child of six years.

Long after her roommate was asleep, Agnes' thoughts were busy. She wondered if she had done wrong in going to the dance hall at all. She had not really meant any harm; but had it been a wise thing? She did not feel as happy as before. She felt as though she had been placed—no, rather she had *placed herself*—on a level with every one else in the room. The young man who had been so solicitous for her to dance was not supposed to know that she was a Christian. He had seen her in the ball room; was not that enough to lead him to suppose that she belonged to the world? Had she gone “to the glory of God”? Would she have expected to meet her Saviour there? She almost shuddered as she thought of what she had done. Had she showed her colors as she entered that gay room? She thought not. She was sorry she had gone. She had not meant to do wrong; but she had decided the question of going without asking her Heavenly Father about it. With a prayer for forgiveness, and help to do better and act more like a Christian in the future, she fell asleep.

She slept later than common the next morning; but nearly every one in the house did that. It was Sunday, and breakfast itself was later than usual. As they sat around the table, Agnes asked how far it was to the church. Mrs. Chapman laughed, and said she was sure she did not know. There was no church that she knew of within several miles.

“Then what do the people do, Cousin Lucy?”

“Stay around the hotel, or go to drive mostly.”

“And not go to church at all?”

“No. How can they?”

The little girl's face grew very thoughtful. “I should think,” she said, slowly, “that where there are so many people, they would build a church.”

“That would hardly pay, you know. The hotel is only open about four months during the year. And then, to tell the truth, I do not suppose most of them care if they do have a vacation of church going, as well as of other things. I am sure I do not.”

“Then they never go to church all summer,” mused Agnes, half aloud.

“Oh! they frequently have preaching at the hotel—whenever there is a clergyman staying here who happens to be willing to officiate. I believe there is no one of the kind here to-day, however.”

Agnes finished her breakfast in silence. Ever since she had been old enough to go to church, she had been constant in her attendance there. She wondered how it would seem not to go to service all day.

When the meal was finished, most of the boarders strolled out on to the veranda, in a listless sort of way. What a dreary forenoon it was! Every one seemed to act as though they wished it were some other day. Groups were scattered here and there, talking on various topics.

But to the child brought up with strict views in regard to the Lord's Day, it seemed no less than sacrilege.

After dinner, Louise announced to Agnes that she had heard there was to be a concert—a sacred concert, she believed—in the hall, that afternoon.

“A what?” said her cousin.

“A sacred concert, by the orchestra.”

“The band play on Sunday?”

“Why, yes; sacred music, you know.”

“What! church music and Gospel Hymns?”

“I suppose so.”

Agnes pondered this some time, and at length came to the conclusion that she did not know that it was more wicked to play church music on brass instruments than on an organ. Probably she would hear some of those good old hymns she had been longing for all day. It would seem just a very little like going to church, she fancied.

Accordingly, at the appointed hour she went into the hall. In a short time the band began. A look of amazement came across her face. What were they playing? She did not know. She only knew it was not any music that she had ever heard in church, and certainly did not sound much like *sacred* music of any kind. It was not *dance* music, like she had heard the evening before—that was all it had to recommend it. She had come expecting to hear “Nearer, my God, to thee,” or, “How Firm a Foundation.” She moved uneasily in her chair. Ought

she to stay and hear any more? Finally she touched her cousin's arm.

"I do not think I care to stay any longer," she said.

Louise looked up and asked "Why not?" But Agnes was gone.

Where should she go? She might as well stay in the hall as to go out on the veranda; and even in her own room she could hear the music. At last she decided she would go off somewhere, and write to her father. So, with pencil and paper she made her way to the woods, down by the spring house, where some seats had been put up for the accommodation of any who might wander that way. And there, with the soft wind blowing about her face, and the fragrant pine all around, enjoying the first sacred stillness she had known that day, she wrote the following brief epistle:

"DEAR PAPA: I am out in the pine woods, writing this letter. I came here, because I could not be quiet in the hotel. They are having a concert there this afternoon, and it is Sunday, too, papa. They call it a sacred concert; but I don't know why they should. Last evening they had a ball, and I went in to see them dance, because I had never seen anything of the kind. But I was very sorry I went. I do not think it is any place for a Christian. I didn't really mean to do wrong; but I saw, as soon as they began to dance, that I ought not to have gone. It is very gay here, and I find it hard always to do just right.

"I miss you ever so much, dear papa; but I try not to be lonesome. Mrs. Chapman is kind to me, and it is a lovely place here. I can see the mountains from my window, and they are just grand. I hope you were not seasick, and that you like Eng-

land. Nearly one week of the six has passed already. I had a letter from Aunt Ellen yesterday, and she said everything was all right at home, and that Jane wished to be remembered to me. I do not think of any more to write just now. Pray for me, papa.

“Your Loving Daughter,

“AGNES RICE.”

After her short letter was finished, Agnes sat for some time. She would not go back to the hotel until she was pretty sure the music was over. When at length she did reach the veranda steps, she found that the people in the hall had dispersed, and were wandering or sitting round as aimlessly as before.

Louise, in company with the youngest Miss Van Alsten, met her at the door of the office.

“Where in the world did you go to so suddenly, and what have you been doing?” asked Louise.

“I have been in the woods, down by the spring house, writing to papa.”

“Well, you missed a good concert, that’s all I have to say. You need not have gone, either; for the last of it was solemn enough even for *religious* people.” Here the speaker and Miss Van Alsten exchanged knowing glances. “The last piece was very grave. I guess it was Old Hundred, or something of that sort.”

To these remarks Agnes made no reply, but passed on into the hotel, while Louise and Miss Van Alsten started for a walk.

CHAPTER IV.

ENDURING.

AGNES was sitting in her room one afternoon, busy with some little mats that she was crocheting as a surprise for her Aunt Ellen, when the door opened and Mrs. Chapman looked in.

“So you are here, are you?” she observed. “The girls want you down stairs.”

“The girls?”

“Yes. Louise, and Florence Van Alsten, and one or two others. I believe they want to see you about some games.”

Agnes laid aside her work and went down. She found the girls grouped round a table, with Miss Van Alsten talking to them.

“Oh, here you are,” cried Louise, as Agnes entered; “we want you to make up the set. Florence is going to teach us to play euchre.”

Agnes started back as though she had suddenly received an electric shock, but the others did not appear to notice it.

“There is a chair for you,” said Louise, motioning to her to be seated. “Now we shall be all right.”

“I thank you, but I don’t care—I don’t think—I mean I don’t know how to play,” stammered Agnes, becoming more and more confused.

“No more do we,” was the answer. “Didn’t I say Miss Florence was going to teach us?”

“Yes; but if you will excuse me, I think I will not learn.”

“Nonsense! why not? Don’t be absurd and keep us all waiting.”

“I thank you, but I would a great deal rather not learn. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I think you can find some one to take my place.”

Louise looked annoyed, and grasping her cousin by the arm drew her toward herself.

“I beg of you,” she whispered, “not to be so disagreeable. Miss Van Alsten will be offended, and it is really too bad for you to act so.”

“Perhaps Agnes will be so kind as to give us her reasons for not wishing to play,” said Miss Van Alsten, in a cold voice.

“I am sure I am very much obliged to you all,” began Agnes, while her cheeks grew scarlet, “but I never learned the game, and I feel sure papa would not be pleased for me to engage in it; and even if he did not object, I could not do it.” This last statement made with a sudden determination not to lay the blame on any one else, but to stand true to her convictions.

“And pray may I ask why?” This from Miss Van Alsten again.

There was a brief struggle. The little girl involuntarily shut her hands tightly together and her eyes filled with tears, which she would not let fall. Then she said, in a low voice that was almost a whisper:

“Miss Van Alsten, I am a Christian.”

A scornful laugh greeted this remark, followed by the question:

“I suppose by that you mean to insinuate that all the rest of us are *heathen*?”

“I did not say so,” was the faint reply,

“Agnes, you are fairly insulting,” cried Louise, in a rage. “Do be decent, at least, or I won’t own you as any cousin of mine.”

Poor child! As she stood there in the gaze of all those girls, she might almost have wished the floor to open and let her sink through out of sight.

“May I ask what your being a Christian, as you call it, has to do with the question?” said Miss Van Alsten, with provoking coolness.

“You would not understand me!—oh, you would not understand me!” said Agnes, fairly breaking down and sobbing. “I did not mean to be rude, Miss Van Alsten, I really did not, but you asked me the question.”

She could bear no more, but turned away and left

them, not, however, in time to avoid hearing the young lady remark with a sneer :

“There is religion for you with a vengeance. I do not care for any of that sort myself.”

Agnes rushed out of the door and down the plank walk, not stopping until she reached her seat in the woods, where she threw herself down, and burying her face in her hands, sobbed as though her heart would break. How could she ever endure the remaining weeks, she asked herself, exposed as she was to taunt and ridicule? It was hard enough to be separated from her father without this additional trouble. She counted how long it would probably be that she would have to remain here, and then counted the days she had already been from home : they seemed small in comparison with those ahead of her. But suddenly there came to her mind some words her mother had once spoken to her : “It is only one step at a time, my dear—one day at a time—one moment at a time. God never gives us to-morrow’s grace to-day.”

She dried her eyes. She would try, with the Lord’s help, to do as her dead mother had said. She was thinking it over, when suddenly she heard footsteps approaching and some one whistling a lively tune. She would rather not have been seen by any one just then, but there was no time to make an escape. The footsteps and the whistling came nearer and nearer and suddenly stopped

before her. She looked up, and her eyes met those of her Cousin Herbert.

“Whew! you here?” was the exclamation. “What’s up?”

Agnes could not help smiling at the greeting.

“What’s the trouble, anyhow, Cousin Agnes?”

“How do you know there is any?”

“Your eyes tell that. People do not generally have such red eyes for nothing.”

“I am afraid I have offended the girls,” said Agnes, her voice nearly ending in a sob.

“Nonsense! More likely they have offended you.”

“I really did not mean to offend, Cousin Herbert, but Miss Van Alsten asked me a question, and I felt obliged to answer her.”

“I should not care a continental if I had offended her,” with peculiar stress laid on the “her”; “she is a stuck-up piece, anyway. I say these people that feel so much better than other folks had better go away and live by themselves. No one would miss them.”

“I was very sorry to hurt their feelings, though. I know Cousin Louise thought me rude.”

“Oh, bother! what do you care for Louise? If any one can go ahead of her in rudeness, just bring her forward. If she is the one who has been troubling you, I’ll settle it at short notice.”

“Oh, no!” cried the child; “please don’t say anything

to her about it; it would only make her angry and do no good. I had much rather you would not. I am sure I forgive them. I did not at first, but I do now."

"I would not forgive them, I can tell you. I never forgive an injury."

"Oh, Cousin Herbert, do not, please do not say that!" There was real distress in her voice this time. "I am sure I forgive them. I do not think they realized what they said."

"Then I would make them, if I were you. But come, let us go back to the hotel. It will not do for you to mope here any longer."

So after some urging on his part, he induced Agnes to go back with him. They sat on the veranda for some time, Agnes looking at her dear mountains and Herbert whittling a stick. Neither of them said much until Louise appeared on the scene.

"So here you are, are you?" she asked, with a toss of her head. "Mamma says we are all to drive over to Shaker Village this afternoon, unless possibly Cousin Agnes may feel too pious to ride with us sinners."

"Hold your tongue, can't you," said Herbert. "I should think you had been disagreeable enough for one day."

"As it's a free country, I suppose I have a right to speak," was the angry retort.

“I would not be as hateful as you are, Louise, for a small farm.”

“Oh, you wouldn't, would you? Perhaps some folks may think you are already. Possibly you might have been now, if you had seen what I saw this morning. If there is anything I detest, it is a *show* of religion.”

“You are not troubled that way.”

“Oh, don't; please don't,” said Agnes, looking really distressed. “I should be glad to go and see the Shakers. I never saw any; but papa has told me about them. They believe in Mother Ann Lee, do they not?”

“I think they do,” said Herbert. Louise said nothing.

“I did not know there were any round here. How far away are they?”

“About three miles, I should judge.

“Cousin Louise,” said Agnes, timidly, after a brief pause, “I am very sorry if I offended you. I did not mean to; but you know Miss Van Alsten asked me a question, and I was obliged to answer it. I really did not mean to be rude.”

“You succeeded admirably, though.”

“You will forgive me, if I was; will you not, though?”

“Oh, I am willing to let it *drop*. That is the best way. I do not care to hear any more about it.”

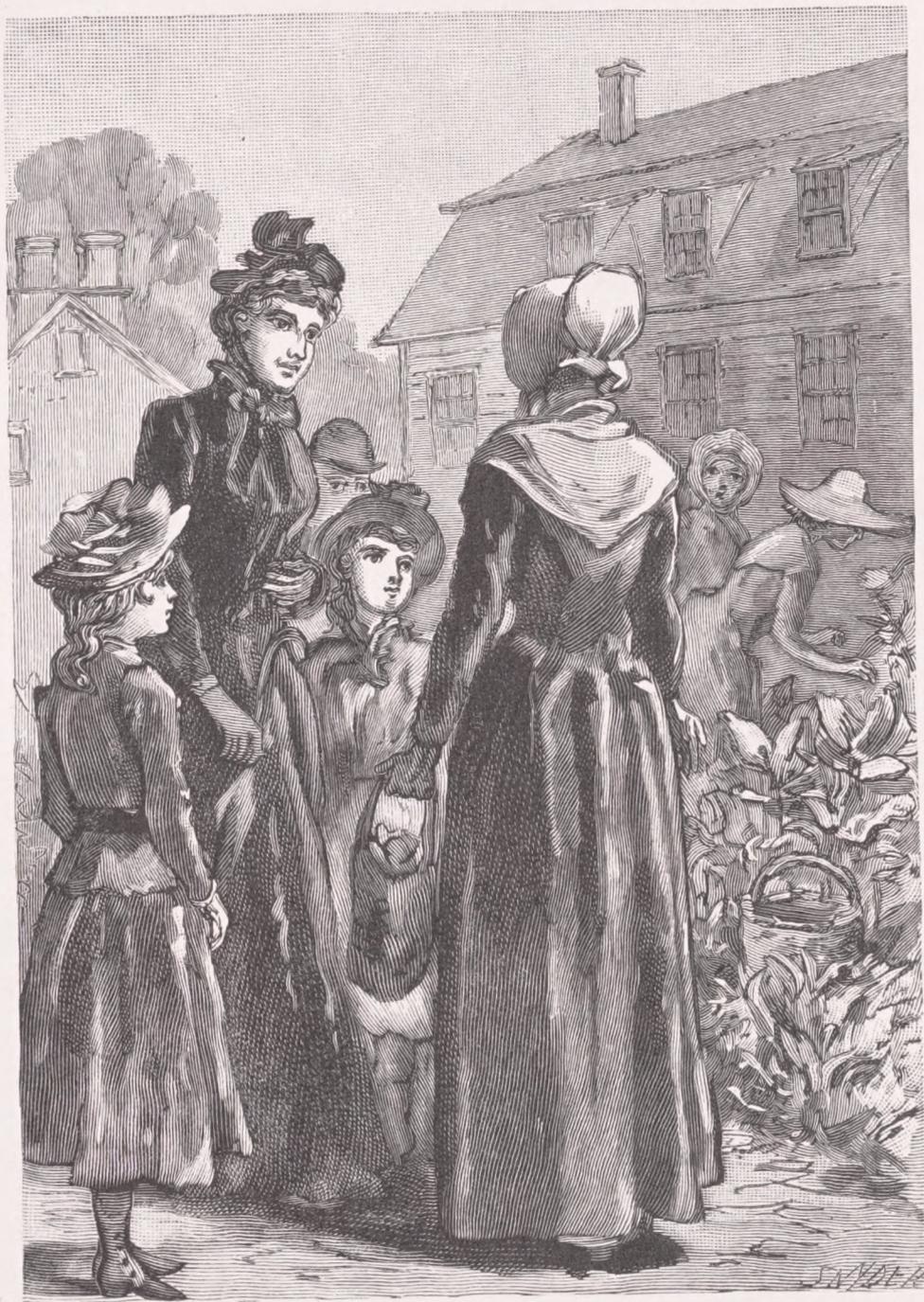
The bell summoning them to dinner just then, the conversation was brought to a close. Louise assumed a haughty air during dinner, while Agnes felt as though

she would much prefer going to her room. The uncomfortable meal ended, however; and Mrs. Chapman being in a hurry to start, they were soon seated in the carriage. The day was so pleasant that troubles were soon forgotten, and all three children entered into the enjoyment of the drive as though nothing had happened.

There were three buildings; one a plain, small church, the others large stone edifices, which were the homes of the Shakers. They rapped at the door of one of the latter, and a woman appeared. She wore the customary dress and cap; and although Agnes had never seen any one dressed in such a strictly plain way, she could but notice how scrupulously neat it all was.

The woman received them kindly, and offered to show them round the premises. Here too everything was painfully plain, but strictly clean. She took them to the garden where the young girls, all dressed Shaker fashion, were busily at work. The vegetables were growing finely, and the hop vines made Agnes' eyes sparkle with delight. She took them into the church, which was not at all like any church they had ever been in before. No carpet, chandeliers, stained glass windows, or even pulpit; but a few seats for those who might, out of curiosity, come to see them; and a bare space of floor in front, where the Shakers marched, danced, and sang songs to Ann Lee.

Then their goods were exposed for sale, some of them



Step by Step.

Page 56.

being really very pretty and tempting. Little baskets, needle books, and napkin rings made of the white straw work; packages of their preserved flag and ginger; photographs of the place, and various other articles. The party made a few purchases, and then said good-bye. They did not go directly back to the hotel; but took a more circuitous way through the woods.

“I am glad I am not a Shaker,” said Louise, when they left. “How dreadful it must be to live in such a gloomy house, and not see anything of the world!”

“Then besides that, they believe in Mother Ann Lee, as they call her,” said Agnes.

“Well, I don’t care what they *believe*. It is only the dreadful gloominess I should object to.”

“Oh, but it is so dreadful to believe that a woman is Christ. Just think of that!”

“Well, of course I do not agree with them; but then what is the use of puzzling one’s brains over the differences in religion? How can we know who is right and who wrong?”

Agnes opened her eyes, and simply said: “The Bible, you know.”

“Oh, yes, I know. But people interpret it differently. I suppose one has as good a right to his opinions as another.”

“I think,” said Mrs. Chapman, speaking for the first time, “that one who does as nearly right as one can, need

not worry. Do all the good works you can, and you cannot help coming out right."

"But good works cannot save any one, you know," ventured Agnes, in a timid voice.

"If good works will not save any one, then I do not know what will."

"Do you think the thief on the cross was saved by good works, Cousin Lucy?"

"I think,—well, I really do not know as I ever thought much about it. Perhaps that was an exceptional case."

"Would you mind if I should ask you why it was an exceptional case?"

"Really I can't say," answered Mrs. Chapman, with a laugh. "You are a very precocious child, Agnes—quite a philosopher. There! children; there is a view for you."

They had just come out into a little cleared place, across which they could obtain a grand view of the mountains. They all admired it, but no one was so enthusiastic in her admiration as Agnes. They stopped the carriage, and spent some time in taking in the view; but Mrs. Chapman, on consulting her watch, said they must hasten, as it was getting late.

When they reached the hotel, it wanted but fifteen minutes to tea time. So Mrs. Chapman hurriedly sent the children off to dress for tea.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY OF REFRESHING.

SATURDAY night came again; but although Louise did her best to induce Agnes to go to the hop, it was all in vain. She stood firm. It was hard to be laughed at and ridiculed, but she had made up her mind that she would not again visit the dance hall.

The Sunday that followed was some improvement on the previous one, for there was a minister stopping at the hotel who consented to conduct the services and to deliver a short sermon; however, it was not much like the Lord's Days that Agnes was accustomed to enjoy.

There was one Sunday, however, which the child remembered as one of the happiest days of her stay at the Springs. She had been looking forward to the day with some uneasiness as to how it would be spent, there being no minister at the house, and a secret wish that she were at home. An announcement was made at the breakfast table, however, which changed her feelings completely, and let her see that the dear Lord does bring days of refreshing for his children even when they are in seemingly dry places.

One of the boarders made the remark that people

would have no excuse for not attending church that day, whatever they might have other days, although it was rather a strange church he would admit. A man was to preach in the woods, about a mile distant from the hotel, and afterward was to baptize a number of people down at the lake. Agnes fairly caught her breath. She felt as though she would never borrow trouble again; here she had been fretting about this day, and the Lord had given her more than she would ever have dared to ask for in such a place as this.

She looked up at the speaker, and with eyes sparkling, asked him the time of the service. He said that he believed the preaching was to be at ten, the other service immediately following.

“I think I will go,” announced Louise—“that is, to the baptism. I don’t care about any sermon, but I never saw a baptism of that kind. I wish it was not so far, though.”

Mrs. Chapman thought she would not venture on so long a walk. Herbert and Louise would go down to the lake after the sermon was over, but Agnes would go to the whole of the services, notwithstanding Louise declared that she would certainly tire herself all out sitting on a rough, old seat in the woods for an hour or more listening to a prosy sermon. Agnes, however, thought differently, so go she would, and go she did.

It was rather a tiresome walk for the little girl. The

day was warm, and part of the way led her through deep sands. She was used to walking on brick sidewalks, but nothing daunted, she plodded her way along as best she could alone, while the sand filled her shoes and impeded her progress. She did not know the way, but followed others whom she judged by their appearance to be bound for the same destination. The walk came to an end at last, and she found herself at the place of meeting. There was a small temporary platform built up under the shade of a large maple tree, while a little table served as a pulpit. The seats for the congregation certainly could not be called comfortable, being of rough boards.

Agnes was just in time for the services. The minister rose and gave out a hymn. He was rather young, but spoke with the zeal and fervor of one of maturer years, and to the little girl so hungry for the words of the Bible, it seemed as though they had never sounded sweeter. The hymn given out was a familiar one, in which the greater part of the congregation joined. Then the prayer that followed was one that went straight to the heart of the listener, and the minister kneeling there on that rude platform, with uncovered head, seemed to be no stranger at the throne of grace. The prayer being ended, they sang again, and then the speaker rose and announced his text. It was from Matthew 10 : 32, 33 : " Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whoso-

ever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

He began by asking the question: “My friend, do you wish Christ to confess you before his Father by-and-by? If so, you know the conditions. I bring no new message to you to-day, but one that you have heard often and often—some of you, indeed, so often that I fear it is beginning to lose its effect upon you; but once more you are permitted to listen. I wish for a few moments to speak to you of the great love of the Lord Jesus Christ in leaving his home in glory and condescending to become man and dwell among men. And why was it? Was it for any glory or honor that he hoped to gain for himself, or was it because of the great love he felt toward us poor sinners? Was it because even in our most holy moments we deserved such love? The Bible answers nay. ‘For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly.’ Some people have a mistaken notion of *earning* a right to one of the mansions prepared above. Is there any one here who has a similar idea? If so, let me ask you how many good works you deem sufficient to make atonement for the transgressions you have committed? Does the Bible answer? Yes; it says: ‘By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.’”

The speaker went on thus for some few minutes, enlarging on the love of Christ and his terrible sufferings, and then took up the other point of the discourse.

“But, do you say with the terrified jailer, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ Let me, with Paul, say, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’; and when you believe, do as he did—*confess him*. To-day a number of our friends are to confess Christ before the world in baptism. And I pray God that the baptismal services may speak to the hearts of the unsaved, more eloquently than any words of mine can. As you see your friends and acquaintances buried beneath the water, thus typifying their death and burial to sin, and raised again, thus showing forth their resurrection to a new life, may you be led to inquire of your own heart, ‘Why not I?’ *They* are confessing Christ; by-and-by *he* will confess *them*. Will he also confess you? Or will you be among those who are to be denied by him, and sent away into everlasting punishment? You will be with one class or the other, for there is no neutral ground.

“In closing, let me quote a few words from the Rev. J. G. Pike, which were given me to read when I was under conviction, and which were the means, in God’s hand, of leading me to decide that I would be found at the Lord’s right hand in that day. Speaking of the great patience and long-suffering of God, he says: ‘And when will that love cease? The narrow span of time cannot set limits to its riches; and the ample ages of eternity will never bring its end. He declares that he will display it there by having his followers with him,

and by exalting them to honors inconceivable now. There he will give them eternal deliverance from labors, sins, and sorrows. There he will own them before his Father, and before an assembled world, and through eternal ages will bless them with his presence, and enrich them with his love and care. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." My dear unconverted friend, do you wish to be among the number?"

There were tears in the eyes of many of the hearers, as he finished. Would the seed sown spring up and bear fruit? God alone knew. They sang again, and then walked down to the shore of the lake.

There were two young girls who walked just behind Agnes. They were evidently from some of the country houses, and not used to hearing many sermons. Said one of them, in a voice that expressed pent-up emotion:

"I never heard any one talk so before—never. I tell you it went right to my heart. I never thought about it in that way before. Do you suppose that the Saviour would confess *us*, Sarah, if we were to die now?"

Her companion shook her head sadly.

"I'm afraid not," she said. "I never did anything so very bad; that is, I never stole, nor swore, excepting once, when Farmer Hoyt's cattle got into our garden,



Step by Step.

and I had to go and drive them out. But then I never did nothing very good, either; and"—in a reverent voice, lowered almost to a whisper—"I never confessed him. So why should he confess me?"

The words to which they had listened had been received into their hearts; but whether they would find lodgment or not, eternity would reveal.

The shore of the lake was soon reached. Here Agnes found Herbert and Louise waiting. The scene was impressive and beautiful; yet there were those who seemed to see nothing in it, and the few words spoken by the preacher were as the drops of rain beating against the window pane, and making no impression.

The first candidate was a young man of perhaps twenty years of age; and as he was led out into the water, an almost heavenly expression was on his face.

"My brother," said the minister, "do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do you promise to be his disciple unto death?"

And clear and distinct came the answer, "I do."

"Then, upon this confession of your faith, I do now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The people at the water's edge sang

"Oh, happy day that fixed my choice,"

and the young man was led up out of the water.

There were four others who were baptized; two of them being women. As the last candidate reached the shore, the minister, who had lingered a moment in the water, raised his hands as though to pronounce the benediction, and said: "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."

The crowd slowly wended their way homeward. Louise at first was inclined to be talkative; Agnes, for the most part, silent.

"I never saw anything like that before," said Louise. "I should have thought they would have been dreadfully afraid, shouldn't you, Cousin Agnes?"

"No."

"I should, though. I wouldn't dare to be baptized, I am sure, should you?"

"Yes, I have been," was the simple reply.

"What! like that?"

"Yes; only it was in a baptistery, in the church.

"But did you go into the water just the same?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a church member?"

"Yes."

There was nothing more said just then. For once Louise seemed a trifle awed; while Herbert maintained a complete silence the whole of the way home.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME AGAIN.

THE six weeks were ended, and now the day for returning home again had come. The trunks were packed and standing on the veranda, waiting for the baggage wagon. Agnes was delighted with the prospect of seeing her father again; yet there was a little feeling of regret as seated in the stage she saw the hotel pass from view. They had been weeks of loneliness and trial to her in many ways, yet she had enjoyed herself for all that. The ride to the station as well as the rest of the journey was made for the most part in silence. Somehow none of the party seemed to feel just like conversation. In the case of Agnes, this was probably due in part to the thoughts of her father, which filled her mind. His steamer had been due the day before, and consequently she expected him to meet her at the station. So they sped along mile after mile in silence, broken occasionally by a few words from some member of the party.

The cars were nearing the city where Agnes lived, when she touched Mrs. Chapman timidly on the arm.

“Cousin Lucy,” she said, “I wish to thank you for your kindness to me while I have been with you.”

“Oh, pray do not mention it,” said the lady. “I assure you it was a pleasure to us to have you for one of our party. What I did was nothing—nothing worth mentioning, that is.”

“You were very kind, though.”

“Oh, well, you were no trouble, I am sure—not half the trouble Louise is.”

Not liking to cause any further comparisons to be made, Agnes settled back in her chair again; only for a few minutes, however, for it was soon time for her to collect her things, as they were coming into the station. How her heart beat! Now she would see her father; but supposing, after all, something had happened that he should not be there? She could hardly bear the thought; she even dreaded to look out of the window lest she should fail to see him. But she must look. Yes, there he was!—her dear, dear father, whom she had not seen for six long weeks. She bade the Chapmans a hasty good-bye and rushed out of the car. The next moment she was clasped in her father's arms and was really shedding tears of joy. He put her aside for a moment to enter the car and invite the Chapmans to stop over with him, but they said they must hasten on. Then he went back to Agnes.

“And how is my little girl?” he asked, after he had attended to her baggage and started for home with her.

“Very well, papa.”

“Was my pet very lonesome?”

“Sometimes very lonesome.”

“And did you find it hard to show your colors as a Christian?”

“Oh, papa, very! I am afraid I did not always do it, either. I am sure that I was not as good as I should have been.”

They walked on in silence for some time. Then Agnes asked her father when he reached home.

“Yesterday morning,” he replied. “The steamer was on time. We had a very good passage returning, better even than we had going over.”

“Were you sick, papa?”

“No, nothing to speak of.”

“Oh, papa,” cried the little girl, clapping her hands, “there is our house! Oh, how nice it does seem to see it again! Is Aunt Ellen well?”

“Yes, they are all well.”

In a few moments more she was in her aunt's arms, while Jane, all smiles, was looking on and telling how much better Miss Agnes looked; she had really grown quite stout, besides being brown as a berry.

The rest of the day was spent very quietly. Agnes, being somewhat tired by her long journey, was contented to walk over the house, examining everything that came in her way, and then, after tea, to sit quietly by her father's side in the library and hear about his voyage,

while he, in turn, listened to what she had to say of her visit to the Springs.

“So you think them rather gay there, do you?” he asked, after hearing her accounts of the people.

“Very, papa. I wondered sometimes if there were any Christians in the whole hotel. I saw one or two that I thought might be, but I could not really tell. Most of them, though, did not seem to care for anything but dressing, dancing, and things of that kind. The Chapmans are not Christians, papa.”

“No; I know they are not. I wish they were. Mrs. Chapman had a Christian mother, however, and was consequently brought up in a Christian home, but that good mother has gone to her reward without seeing her daughter brought to Christ.”

There was silence a moment, and then Agnes said, thoughtfully:

“You would not think, to hear her talk, that she ever knew what it meant to be a Christian.”

“Little girl,” said her father, fondly stroking back her hair, “it sometimes seems that those who are brought up in Christian homes are harder to make any impression on than those who are not, especially if they grow up to manhood or womanhood without yielding themselves to the Saviour. They seem to be hardened.”

They sat there a little longer, and then Mr. Rice said Agnes really must go to bed, as it was getting late and

she was tired. It seemed as though she could hardly bear to leave her father, but finally, after a good many attempts, she gave him one more kiss and departed.

When she awoke the next morning, it took her some little time to realize where she was. It seemed hardly possible to her that she was really at home, in her own little room once more. In haste she rose and dressed, hardly able to wait that long before seeing her father. It seemed almost too good to be true that he was really in the house, and at the breakfast table her Aunt Ellen laughingly declared that Agnes feasted her eyes on her father so much that she nearly forgot to eat.

After Mr. Rice had gone to his office, Agnes again walked over the house, taking a general survey of everything that came in her way.

She had completed her tour of inspection and was in her own room, when, hearing her aunt go by, she opened the door and called to her. She came in and sat down by the window.

“Aunt Ellen,” said Agnes, shyly, handing her a little package, “here is something I made for you when I was away.”

“For me?” And the good lady opened her eyes in surprise.

“Yes. I thought, perhaps, you would like them. Some one stopping at the Springs showed me how.”

By this time the bundle was untied and the little crocheted mats were spread out on her aunt's lap.

"Why, Agnes," she said, "how very thoughtful of you! they are so pretty! And did you make them all yourself?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You were very kind, my child," said her aunt, kissing her, "and I shall put them in my room right away, where every time I see them they will remind me of Agnes."

The child was delighted. To her it truly was a pleasure to give as well as to receive.

But she had an opportunity to try the receiving a little later. It was that evening, when Mr. Rice and Agnes were again seated in the library. Her father left the room for a moment and returned with a small package, which he handed to her, saying:

"I brought this from London for my little girl. Will she accept it with papa's love?"

She held the package for some time without unwrapping it.

"I don't know what it can be," she said, after she had turned it over and over.

"Supposing you undo it and see," suggested her father. She laughed, and commenced to untie the twine. Whatever it was, it had been carefully wrapped in tissue paper. That being off, disclosed a very pretty little



Step by Step.

plush box. Again the child hesitated before opening it. Her father would not hurry her this time, but let her take it leisurely. After a moment or two, she pressed the little spring that held the lid down and looked in. Then there burst from her lips the exclamation: "Oh, papa!"

"How does my daughter like it?"

"Oh, papa!" she said again.

He laughed, and asked if it took her breath away.

"What a dear, dear little watch!" she managed to say at last. "Is it really for me?"

"Certainly. For whom else should it be?"

"Oh, but it is too good to be true!" said the child. "I always did so want a watch, but I did not expect to have one until I was grown up." She took it out of the case now and examined it.

"How pretty it is, and how very, very good of you, papa, to buy it for me."

He opened the cover for her and let her read the inscription that was engraved within: "Agnes Rice, from her father." Then he shut it and handed it to her again.

"I must go and find Aunt Ellen and show it to her," she cried, jumping up and running out of the room.

Mr. Rice followed her with his eyes as she left him. How very like her mother she was growing to be, in both looks and manner! If only she would grow up to be like her in character, that would be best of all.

CHAPTER VII.

DUTY.

IT was the winter following Agnes' visit at the Springs. She had been praying that the Lord would give her some work to do for him, and also make her willing to do it; but it came in an unexpected way. It was on this wise: She was in prayer-meeting one evening, when the minister chose for his Scripture reading a part of the third chapter of Ezekiel, beginning with the seventeenth verse. As Agnes listened to the words, she was almost startled:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

Some questions arose in her mind. Had she indeed been made a watchman? If so, had she been faithful? Whom had she warned? If she had *not* warned her

friends and acquaintances, then would their blood be required at her hand? She began to think how many she had ever spoken to on the subject of their soul's salvation. There were two or three that she remembered. One, a very dear friend and schoolmate, for whose conversion she had longed, after she had herself come out into the light. But what were the two or three, as compared with the hundreds and thousands all around her? Like a flash came to her mind their servant Jane. Had any one ever warned her? Certainly she had not. But then Jane would not understand what she meant. Her belief, if she had any, was so entirely different; and perhaps she would be greatly offended. Oh, she could not speak to *her!* It seemed an impossibility. She would not give it another thought, but try and think of some one else to approach who would understand her better.

She could think of no other person, however, but Jane. Why could she not forget it? What would be the use, anyway? If Jane did not pay any heed to her words, as she probably would not, it would avail nothing. But like a flash came those words: "Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; *but thou hast delivered thy soul.*"

She heard but very little of the rest of the services. She believed it was mostly about bearing the cross, and about warning the wicked; and she went home feeling

as though a great weight rested on her heart. The next day it was no better. What should she do? Wherever she went, the burden went with her. Whenever she tried to pray, it rose up before her.

If only the Lord had asked her to do something else, she thought she could have done it; but this was so hard. Poor child! She stood where many another Christian has stood—facing an unperformed duty. And no person in that position was ever yet known to advance spiritually. She was not happy; and whenever she saw Jane, it sent a pang to her heart. She knew her duty, but was unwilling to do it.

So the days and weeks went by, and still the duty remained unperformed; and still Agnes was unhappy, and lost ground spiritually. How long could she stand this?

She went into the kitchen one day, where Jane was at work. She had carefully avoided being alone with her before; but she went in now, hoping she might have the courage to say a word. It was Saturday afternoon; and, after making several commonplace remarks, she alluded to the fact that the next day was Sunday. Jane assented to it.

The next remark was something about going to church; and she asked Jane if she intended to go. She said she presumed so. Then she asked if she enjoyed going? Well enough, she supposed.

Agnes gave it up. She knew she had not commenced

right, and really felt as though she could not say another word. And so, as more days and weeks went by, she got more and more into the dark, and grew more and more unhappy.

At last one day, as she was kneeling in prayer, it all seemed to come up before her, and so overwhelm her that she was obliged to stop. It seemed impossible for her to offer another word of prayer so long as she was living in disobedience. She rose from her knees, feeling as though the very foundations were giving way underneath her. She took up her Bible; but not knowing where to turn, she let it fall open of itself. The place was Mark, the fifteenth chapter. She read the chapter through; and when she came to the cruel mockings and scourgings which the Saviour endured, and realized that it was for her; and that for her he hung upon the cross and died, she was completely humbled. Here the Saviour had done so much for her, and could she not do this one little thing that he asked of her? She fell upon her knees and sobbed. They were tears of penitence, however; and as she shed them, she prayed for forgiveness.

It was not easy for her even now to do what she knew to be her duty. She had put it off so long that it had grown harder, instead of easier. But she asked the Lord to help her, and she felt assured that he would. She trembled considerably as she went down to the kitchen; but she knew wherein her strength lay.

Jane was sitting by the table, paring apples. She had a tin pan in her lap which held the unpared apples, and into which the peeling was dropping as it was shaved off. For a long time after, whenever Agnes saw any one paring apples, her mind reverted to this day, when she stood there watching Jane, and trying to find voice to speak.

One apple after another had been disposed of, until there were only six in the pan. This would not do. She must speak.

“Jane,” she said, making a great effort, while her voice seemed to her to sound strangely unnatural, “did you ever think about being a Christian?”

The woman stopped short in her work, with a half-pared apple in her hand, and, without even removing her knife, looked up in surprise.

“What’s that, Miss Agnes?” she asked, looking bewildered.

“Did you ever think about being a Christian, Jane? I mean, ever think you would like to be, or ought to be one, you know?”

“I don’t know,” was the reply. “Mebby I have, and mebbly I haven’t. I don’t s’pose I ever troubled myself much about it, anyway.”

“Then I wish you would. Won’t you, Jane?”

“I don’t know. For the land’s sake, Miss Agnes, whatever put such a notion into your head?”

“I was wondering if any one had ever asked you to become a Christian.”

“I don’t know as ever they did, excepting your mamma. She used to talk to me some. Your mamma was a Christian, if ever there was one, Miss Agnes.”

“I know it,” said the child, with a tremor in her voice. “And wouldn’t you like to be one too?”

“I don’t know. I reckon I’m as good as some *professors*.”

“Oh! but that is not the question, you know. It is what *you* do. Whether *you* love Jesus or not. You do love him, don’t you, Jane?”

The woman shrank from the clear, searching gaze of the child. She moved uneasily in her chair, seemed to be trying to think of a suitable reply, and finally said:

“I wish you wouldn’t talk to me no more about it, Miss Agnes. I suppose I’m old enough to look after myself.”

Agnes subsided, hurt that she should have been repulsed, but with the feeling deep down in her heart that, now that she had done what she could, the results belonged with the Lord.

Her heart was lighter than it had been for weeks. She could pray now. The barrier between her soul and God had been removed; and that night, as she knelt in prayer, it was to consecrate herself more fully to the Master’s service.

CHAPTER VIII.

AGNES AT EIGHTEEN.

NEARLY six years had passed—years that might be said to have been uneventful ones to Agnes in one way; yet no years can be wholly uneventful. Things had gone on quietly, however, and the little girl who had been occupied in studies and play was now just stepping into womanhood.

It was the autumn following her eighteenth birthday. She had said good-bye to school in the summer, wondering, as many other girls have done, what she should find to occupy herself with now that she was to be at home all day. There were two events, however, connected with that autumn that she had some reason to remember. One was her taking a class of little girls in the Sunday-school. It was something that she had often thought of, and work to which she had felt drawn, yet she found, as time went by, it had its discouragements as well as its pleasures; but she was much attached to her class, which consisted of six little girls just drawn from the primary room.

The other incident that occurred at about the same time was entirely different. She received an invitation

to attend a conversation party, to be given by one of her acquaintances. She was not anxious to go—indeed, she rather dreaded it, owing to the fact that she had but a slight acquaintance with the young lady who was to give the party, and would probably not know many of the guests.

She went, however. At first, she felt confident that the evening would not be a pleasant one, fully one-half of the company being entire strangers to her. The cards containing the topics for conversation had been distributed, and the guests were laughing and discussing them. Agnes glanced at her card. Among other subjects, she noticed the following: “My hobby.” “What can a person without any special talent do?” “My idea of true happiness.” “Why do the robins sing in the morning?”

At a signal from the hostess, the gentlemen all started to fill out their cards, which they accordingly handed to the ladies, who selected a subject, underneath which they wrote their name, the gentleman placing his name under the same subject on the lady’s card. Ten minutes were allowed for filling the cards and five minutes to converse on each subject.

The first gentleman with whom Agnes talked was a complete stranger to her, and also a complete bore. The topic was, “My hobby,” and Agnes declared afterward that in her whole life she did not recall any special five

minutes spent as stupidly as those were. The young man talked incessantly. His "hobby," he declared, was dancing. He admired and adored dancing. It was victuals, drink, and life to him. Agnes had no chance to talk herself—indeed, if she had, she would scarcely have known what to say to one so senseless. It was a great relief to her when the signal sounded announcing the expiration of that five-minute period. She hoped the whole evening was not to be spent in that way; it would seem worse than wasted if it was.

The next topic related to the robin, and for five minutes more she listened to foolish talk. The gentleman with whom she conversed on that subject declared it was because it was a very foolish bird—foolish to get up so early in the morning. Why could he not just as well sing an hour or two later? Any one was foolish to rise at an unreasonable hour just to sing. It was simply because the bird lacked common sense.

By the time topic number six had been reached, Agnes was strongly tempted to make her escape and go home, on some pretext or another. She glanced at her card. The seventh number was, "My idea of true happiness," the name under the subject, "R. E. Leighton," some one with whom Agnes had no acquaintance whatever. She waited anxiously to see what kind of a person he might be. He came up to her presently, bowed slightly, and took a seat by her side. She took a general survey of

the young man, and came to the conclusion that he certainly had very nice hands, something which Agnes always observed in any one.

“Well, Miss Rice,” began the gentleman, “you and I are strangers, but I believe we are to converse together a few moments on our idea of true happiness. I suppose that it is a subject on which people’s opinion greatly differ. I trust we may agree. You will pardon me if I ask if you have found true happiness in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

How Agnes’ heart leaped for joy! Here was one among the company, at any rate, who could sympathize with her.

“Oh, yes!” she said, eagerly.

“Praise the Lord for that!” The words were spoken with deep fervor. “Now may I ask if you think there is any true happiness outside of that?”

“I think not—at least, I have never found it.”

“Do you think any one has?”

“No. I have never seen any one who has. Many profess to find it in the world, but their actions prove them still unsatisfied.”

“Very true. There is, indeed, ‘an aching void the world can never fill.’ How long have you known this true happiness, Miss Rice—experimentally, that is?”

“Ever since I was eleven years of age.”

“Has it never failed you?”

“No—that is, not unless it was my own fault. I have always found that when I kept close to the Saviour, he kept close to me.”

“The experience of every true child of God. You know we have his promise for it: ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.’”

“How beautiful that is!”

“Very beautiful, yet how few, even among professing Christians, have that ‘perfect peace’ at all times. They have tastes of it, and then lose it. Why is it, do you think?”

“I suppose because they do not fulfill the conditions.”

“Namely?”

“To have our minds *stayed* on him.”

“That is certainly the reason. Then as to finding pleasure and happiness in the world, we have the experience of the wisest and richest of monarchs: ‘The Preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem.’ His cry is: ‘Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.’ You remember in the second chapter of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon tells what he had to enjoy life with—mirth, laughter, wine, houses, vineyards, gardens and orchards, pools of water, servants, great possessions of cattle, silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, singers and musical instruments of all sorts, and whatsoever his eyes desired, he declared, that he kept not from them; yet

when he looked on the works that his hands had wrought and on the labor that he had labored to do, he declared that *all* was 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' He certainly went to the full extent of earthly luxuries, Miss Rice."

"Indeed, he did. 'For what can the man do that cometh after the king?'"

Just then the signal was given announcing that the five minutes had expired.

"I am very sorry," said Agnes, frankly. "We had just begun to talk, and really, Mr. Leighton, it is the first bit of sensible talk I have been permitted to listen to this evening."

"I trust we are no longer strangers," he said, smiling, "seeing we have one Father in heaven, and belong to the same household of faith."

Agnes wished she need not talk any more that evening. How could she listen to nonsense again with those words still ringing in her ears? As it happened, however, for the few remaining topics she conversed with those with whom she was somewhat acquainted, and the talk did not drift into frivolous jesting so much as before. However, Agnes was not sorry when the topics were exhausted, which brought an end to that part of the programme.

Then came supper. Mr. Leighton was her escort, for which she was heartily glad, although there was no chance to continue the previous conversation then. The

supper passed off pleasantly; then came music, after which the guests began to take their departure.

Mr. Leighton asked the pleasure of seeing Agnes home. They walked along a few moments in comparative silence, making only commonplace remarks occasionally. Then he said:

“So you think much of the conversation this evening of an unprofitable kind, Miss Rice?”

“Yes,” she answered, with a smile.

“It could hardly be called seasoned with salt, I suppose,” he observed.

“No, indeed,” she replied.

There was another brief pause; then Agnes asked him if he were a stranger in the place.

“Yes,” he said. “I am visiting our friend who gave the party. My home is some distance from here.”

They had reached Mr. Rice’s house by this time. The walk had seemed very short. Agnes had intended to talk with him more, but somehow she could not seem to bring it about.

He stopped a moment at the gate, and holding out his hand, grasped hers and gave it a hearty shake.

“I have never been in this city before, Miss Rice,” he said, “and possibly I may never come here again, but I trust we shall be well acquainted in ‘The Sweet By-and-By’!” He lifted his hat and was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

AGNES SAILS TO BERMUDA.

FOR the second time Mr. Rice was called to Europe on business. It was in the month of February, this time. When he announced his intention to Agnes, she laughingly declared that he could not dispose of her on this occasion by sending her into the country, as it was winter, and all the hotels were closed.

"I know it," he replied. "But supposing I should send you somewhere else?"

"I do not know where it could be. You certainly would not wish me to go away alone; and I know of no one else who is going anywhere."

"Perhaps I do, though. How would you like to go with your old friends, the Chapmans, again?"

"Go where with them, papa?"

"They are going to the Bermuda Islands."

"I should like to go, as long as you are obliged to be away. It would be very lonesome *here* without you."

"So I thought."

"But, papa, I really do not feel as though I wanted to go to a large hotel again. I have not wholly gotten over my childish horror of hotel life."

“No need to worry about that, daughter. Mrs. Chapman does not wish to go to one herself this time. She is nervous and not very well, and goes for the rest and change. So she chooses a private boarding place. They heard there was a possibility of my going abroad, and wrote, begging me to send you with them. They really seem quite anxious for your company.”

“Well, papa, I shall miss you; but not so much, I think, as if I were at home.”

“I am very glad you look at it in that way. I only wish it were so I could take you with me. But I am going simply for business, and fear it would be a dull time for you.”

“How soon are we to start, papa?”

“The steamer sails from New York next week, Thursday.”

So at the appointed time Agnes, in company with her father, who was to see her off, met the Chapmans on the deck of the steamer Trinidad.

Mrs. Chapman was a trifle thinner than when Agnes last saw her, more than six years ago. She was very poorly, she said. Everything made her nervous. Louise seemed just the same, although such a time had elapsed since the girls had met. Agnes thought she should have known her anywhere. Herbert, however, was changed. Agnes would hardly have recognized the boy of her acquaintance in this tall, fine-looking young man who came

up to greet her. They all three seemed pleased at the meeting, and declared that she was a great addition to the party.

Agnes had never been to sea before ; so everything was entirely new to her. There were many passengers and she amused herself watching them and the men getting the baggage aboard. The porters were running up and down the saloon stairs, carrying state room trunks, bags, umbrellas, sea chairs, and the various articles people who were going to sea would be likely to take with them.

“How nice this is!” remarked Louise.

“You will not think so in a few hours,” said her brother.

At last the baggage was all aboard, and the steward walked through the saloon and up and down the deck, ringing a bell, and shouting, “All ashore that’s going.”

Mr. Rice kissed his daughter, and hurried ashore. The gang plank was taken up, and the huge cables that fastened the steamer to the wharf were thrown off; then she swung round into the stream.

The people on the dock waved their handkerchiefs, and those on the steamer replied. Slowly at first, and then faster, the Trinidad moved away from the pier, until the people could no longer distinguish the faces of their friends from those of the crowd around. Then there was a scattering all over the deck. Sea chairs

were brought out and arranged on the deck ; the passengers threw their shawls and wraps around themselves, and settled themselves down in comfort.

The ship made her way down North River, past the Bartholdi Statue, and toward the open sea. It was about two hours after they left the dock that Sandy Hook was reached. The steamer began to roll uneasily, and then there was a general thinning out of the passengers on deck. The chairs were vacated, and only the good sailors remained. It was five o'clock when the first bell rang for dinner ; but Herbert was the only one of the party who cared to go down. Soon after, the others went to their state room.

Agnes did not leave her berth for two days. She lay looking round the state room at the things as they slid back and forth. The second night out was very rough. Louise moaned, and wished she had not come ; while Mrs. Chapman declared it was dreadful, and she did not know how she was ever to stand the voyage home again.

Herbert came in to see them often during the two days they were confined there. He generally exasperated Louise on such occasions, however.

“ Was it ever so rough, before, Herbert ? ” she would ask.

“ Rough ! ” he would reply ; “ why, I hope you do not call *this* rough. You wait until you see a good swell on.



Step by Step.

Page 90.



This is about like a mill pond in comparison to what they often have."

Then Louise would begin to fret, and tell him she wished he would stay away. Whereupon he would make his exit, muttering that he wished she would not be so cross, even if she was sea sick.

The day before they were due in port, however, they all felt better, and, with the help of the stewardess, were enabled to get on deck. How delightful it was, after being confined below! They were crossing the Gulf Stream, and the temperature was much warmer than when they left New York. A ship, with all sails set, passed them at some distance, while gulf weed, in great abundance, floated by.

"How strange, not to see any land!" remarked Agnes.

"I am sure I should be most happy if I could see some," said Mrs. Chapman, peevishly. "I never want to go to sea again."

A little later in the day, when Agnes was feeling somewhat better, Herbert took her over the ship. She was much interested in everything she saw. Then he pointed out the captain's bridge, and told her how, some years ago, in a fierce storm, the captain of this steamer had stayed on the bridge day and night, with only crackers and coffee for refreshment; and that the passengers said he had saved the ship by so doing. They made up a large purse of money for him. Then they went up

to the hurricane deck. How high up they seemed, and how far they could see! But in every direction nothing but water met their gaze.

“To-morrow morning, if all goes well, we shall see something else,” said Herbert.

That night, Agnes was awakened by Mrs. Chapman.

“Agnes,” she said, in an excited voice, “do wake up. I am sure something must be wrong. I have tried to waken Louise; but you know just how cross she is when she is sleepy. Don’t you notice that the steamer has stopped, and hear the sailors running round on the deck, and shouting? I am afraid something has happened.”

Agnes roused herself and looked out of the port; but did not see anything alarming. It was bright starlight, and there was just swell enough on to rock the steamer gently.

“I think nothing is the matter, Cousin Lucy,” she said. “We are only nearing land. I can see a light that evidently comes from a lighthouse.”

“Oh, dear!” groaned Mrs. Chapman, “I am so dreadfully nervous. This is such a dangerous coast. There is only one place where vessels can get over the reefs. You know there are reefs all around the islands. Supposing we should not get over right!”

“Oh, there is no danger. You know they always have a pilot.”

“Well, I know; but supposing anything should

happen. I wonder what time it is? It would be dreadful to get on the rocks in the night."

Agnes lit the electric light and looked at her watch. It wanted twenty minutes to one.

Mrs. Chapman made another attempt to arouse Louise; but was still unsuccessful. She fussed and fretted, and declared that even if they *were* going upon the rocks, she didn't see why she couldn't be let alone until the time came.

Mrs. Chapman sighed, and wished she had not come; she wished it were morning; she wished she could see Herbert; and Agnes had all she could do to persuade her not to ring and ask the steward to call him. She wished one of the officers would go by the door, so that she could ask him if they were in danger, and she wished so many things, that Agnes could not help wishing to *herself* that she would go to sleep, or at least let her; but she fussed on.

"There, Cousin Lucy," said Agnes, "there is the pilot boat. I just saw it come along side. Now the pilot is aboard, and you will feel all right. He surely knows just where to go, and will take the helm himself, and steer us safely over the reefs."

Mrs. Chapman sighed, but subsided.

As Agnes turned on her pillow to compose herself for sleep once more, she could but think of the Pilot to whom she had intrusted herself and who was with his own hand

leading her safely over life's tempestuous sea, and she fell asleep, saying over to herself the words of a hymn she had often sung :

“ Jesus, Saviour, pilot me,
Over life's tempestuous sea ;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal ;
Chart and compass come from thee :
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.”

When Agnes awoke again it was day, and the sun was shining brightly. She glanced out of the port, and then uttered a long-drawn “ Oh ! ” The steamer had crossed the reefs and was following the sinuous channel. Islets crowned with green appeared and were passed ; the waters were intensely blue, with tints of emerald and violet.

Neither Mrs Chapman nor Louise were awake, but as Agnes slid down from her berth they both opened their eyes, and in accordance with her request, took a look at the picture. It was enchanting ! So even Mrs. Chapman declared.

They all dressed as quickly as possible and went on deck. Seasickness and all the other discomforts of the voyage were forgotten. How lovely everything was ! The wind was strong, but soft and balmy as June. They were among the larger islands by this time, and the party hardly liked to leave the deck for breakfast. The meal was dispatched as quickly as possible, and they returned to their post of observation. Grassy Bay was passed,

and they were just within the land-locked sound. Hamilton was not yet visible, the island of Bermuda being shaped like an irregular curve. The water was growing shallow, but lost none of its beauty. The maze of islands were slowly passed, their quiet beauty suggesting fitting haunts for rest and peace. Soon, to the left, appeared the town of Hamilton. It seemed to Agnes that her childhood dream of fairyland was realized. The distant hills were covered with trees, the vivid green of the wild orange blending with the more sombre hue of the cedars. The snow-white houses peeped from their surroundings of foliage, looking like pearls in settings of emeralds. Clamoring voices were soon heard, however, and with a sigh Agnes turned from the beauty of the scenery to ascertain the cause of the confusion.

Numerous small boats had come to meet them, and hotel runners were already coming aboard. They besieged the passengers on all sides, and were very anxious to point out the places of interest. Mrs. Chapman had one stationed on each side of her, although she declared to them both that she was not going to a hotel. They seemed to think it just possible that she did not know where she wished to go.

“That island there,” said one of them, pointing to a large island that the steamer was passing, “is Ireland Island, one of the the largest of the group.”

“It contains an immense floating dry dock,” said the

other, evidently taking the words from the mouth of the former.

“It was floated here from England,” interrupted speaker number one, “at great expense to the English Government.”

Speaker number two hereupon began to expatiate on the merits of his hotel, and when he stopped for breath, number one began. At last, after being assured for the fifth or sixth time that the party were going with neither one, they walked off in search of other victims.

All this time the steamer had been slowly making her way along the serpentine channel—slowly, owing to the shallowness of the water and the number of turns to be made. The Hamilton Hotel was conspicuous from its site on the hill, and the Princess, down by the water, was the only building in sight that did not conform to the style; instead of being white, it was painted.

The steamer moved slowly up toward the wharf, which was crowded with people, but the water was so shallow that they ran aground two or three times before they succeeded in bringing the steamer into the desired position. Several rods from the wharf they stopped; but how were the people to get ashore? There was no pier. The mystery was soon solved. Ropes were thrown from the shore to the gangway, and by means of these, two very long logs were drawn across, so that one end of each log rested on the shore, the other on the steamer,

in the place usually occupied by the gangplank. What was to be done now? Numerous colored men commenced scrambling over these and lashing cross pieces from one to the other.

The cross pieces being all lashed on, planks were laid the whole length, and thus a bridge from steamer to shore was constructed. The whole thing took about half an hour, and this was repeated every time the steamer came in. Every one, however, seemed glad to get ashore, even if it were in a novel way.

At length, Agnes and the Chapmans were seated in one of the many carriages in waiting, while the trunks, bearing the cross of the Custom House, were ordered to be sent up later. They drove rapidly through the narrow streets, the horses' hoofs sounding with a hollow ringing sound on the coral pavement. How foreign everything looked! White and green were the prevailing colors, even the streets being of the former, as they were pure coral. The driver turned up a beautiful avenue, shaded by the cedar trees on either side, and stopped before one of the houses. It was two stories high, with an upper and lower veranda in front. The landlady was expecting them, and welcomed them cordially. The hall of the house was uncarpeted, as, indeed, were all the rooms. This seemed very strange at first, and Louise was inclined to look with disfavor on the house for that reason; but upon learning that this was

the common custom in Bermudian houses, and that even among the higher class rugs were substituted for carpets, she felt that, after all, it might be in keeping with the country. They ascended an easy flight of stairs and entered their rooms, which had glass doors opening on the veranda.

“Well, Agnes,” said Mrs. Chapman, after the landlady had left them, “how do you think you shall like Bermuda?”

“Oh, very much!” was the enthusiastic reply.

“I wish we were in the hotel,” said Louise. “Just see what a view we must get from there.”

“I wish we were not,” replied her mother. “I came here for rest, and I would not climb up all those steps to get to the hotel if any one would pay my board for me.”

The remainder of the day passed quickly away. No one excepting Herbert cared to leave the house.

When Agnes lay down that night, it was hard for her to realize where she really was. She looked round the room with its bare floor and white walls, which nevertheless had a wonderfully pleasant and unique air, and thought she had rather be there than in the best hotel on the island. The window was open, and the sweet evening breeze came in, and it was indeed hard to realize that it was the first of March, and that at home the winds were probably howling round the house, and perhaps the snow flying.

CHAPTER X.

NEW SIGHTS.

THE next day was bright and pleasant, and the travelers awoke feeling much refreshed. When breakfast was over, Agnes and Louise set out on an exploring expedition. It was as warm as June would have been at home, and the glare of the sun on the white houses and pavements made shade glasses quite needful.

They walked down the avenue to the principal business street. The stores looked uninviting as far as the display in the windows went; but on entering, their goods were found to be really very nice. They walked along the street for some distance. There were stores one side, and a long wharf and the water on the other. Numerous little donkey carts were in the street; indeed, donkeys seemed nearly as common as horses. They were hitched into small wagons, which were driven, as a general thing, by negro boys. Passing up and down the sidewalks were frequently seen soldiers, dressed in the British uniform; and with their bright red coats and silver trimmings they added picturesqueness to the scene. At last, having walked as far as they wished in

that direction, the girls turned up a street at the left. This took them past some of the dwelling houses, many of which were surrounded by gardens containing the loveliest of roses, English violets, geraniums, moon flowers, and lace plants. There were also banana trees growing in small groves. Before one of these the girls stopped and laughed.

“How very queer!” said Louise.

“Yes,” replied her cousin. “You see that the bananas grow from that large purple flower on the end of the stalk; they grow up until the weight of the fruit and flower bends them over and they hang toward the earth.”

“How homely the leaves are! so broad, and all stripped up by the wind and rain.”

“There is something that is pretty, though, Cousin Louise. See those beautiful flowers in front of that dear little cottage?”

They stood a moment to admire them, when the door of the house was opened, and a colored woman came out. She was dressed as neatly as possible, and wore a gay-colored turban round her head. Seeing the girls, she courtesied, and walked down the path toward the gate.

“Strangers here?” she queried.

“Yes,” said Agnes. “We only came yesterday.”

“How you think you will like Burmudy?”

“Very much. We were taking our first walk this morning, and as we passed here, stopped to admire your beautiful flowers.”

“Will missy have a nosegay?”

“Oh, thank you; but we didn’t mean for you to pick them.”

“Glad to do it, though,” said the woman beginning to break off some of her handsomest roses. “Always glad to give a nosegay to strangers. Do you lub flowers?”

“Yes; I am very fond of them.”

“And you?” turning to Louise.

“Yes; I like them too.”

“How long will you stay on de island?”

“A number of weeks. We do not know exactly how long.”

“Well, den; if missy will come ’round here in four or five weeks from now, I’ll have some shell flowers to gib them.”

“I never saw any shell flowers.”

“No, I reckon not. Well, ’twill be ’bout time for ’em to be out den.”

While she had been talking, the woman had picked two handsome bouquets. And although they were not arranged in hothouse style, they were flowers that no hothouse would have had any reason to be ashamed of. And, after all, who ever saw flowers arranged to look really bad?

She walked to the gate with them, and then bade them good-bye, courtesying as before.

“What a funny woman!” said Louise, when they were out of her hearing.

“She has fine flowers, though.”

A few more turns, and the girls were back at their boarding place. Mrs. Chapman became enthusiastic over the flowers, and declared that the roses were handsomer than those she had paid three and four dollars a dozen for in New York that very winter.

After dinner the announcement was made that the military band was to play in Victoria Park that afternoon. As this was near by, they all decided to go over. The park was a lovely place, with borders of flowers around the outside. There was also plenty of grass, with walks crossing it at all angles, and a goodly number of seats scattered here and there.

The band had begun to play when they reached the place. They stood round there in a circle, all wearing the British uniform. It made a pretty picture in connection with the surroundings; and they played admirably. When the piece was finished, some of them walked back and forth on the white walks, while others threw themselves down on the grass for a short interval, when they were called together again, and played another selection. The concert lasted for an hour or more, and ended, as did all their concerts, with “God

save the queen." Most of the people left the park as the concert finished. A few remained, however; among the latter were Herbert and Agnes.

"Well, how do you like Bermuda?" asked Herbert.

"I think it is the loveliest place I ever was in."

"It isn't a bad place to spend a few weeks, that is certain. I hope you will not get homesick."

"I think not. I miss papa, of course; but I should miss him still more if I were at home."

"There is considerable to be seen here, I am told, although the islands are small. To-morrow, if it is fine, mother said we could take a drive."

"That will be pleasant. Do you know, Cousin Herbert, how so many colored people happen to be here? I should think one-half the population must be composed of negroes."

"They used to be slaves. They were liberated some-time ago, though."

"There are really no aborigines belonging to the islands, are there?"

"No. They were settled first by the English. But——"

"They came to a very lovely spot."

"But I am afraid you will get cold sitting here any longer, even if it is lovely." So saying, he jumped up, and the two walked slowly back to the house.

Soon after breakfast, the next morning, the party set

out in one of those comfortable carriages which are so numerous in Bermuda. There was a gentle breeze blowing from the sea, but the sun was so warm as to render carriage shades quite indispensable. They drove along, the carriage seeming hardly to be dependent on the span of handsome horses that drew it, the roadway was so smooth and hard.

The driver was well posted on all objects of interest, and seemed glad to impart his information to the party in the carriage. The names of trees and plants were asked and answered, as well as various questions on the history of the islands. On they drove, now passing fields of the onion, that plant for which Bermuda is so famous; then through deep cuts in the road, where the coral limestone on either side rose far above the top of the carriage; and again coming out by the shore, where beautiful sights of the water were to be obtained. The colors were grand. Close up to the shore it was nearly white, with a tinge of the yellowish sand, changing as it receded into tints of blue, green, and violet.

This was continued for several miles, until they came to a place by the roadside called Neptune's grotto. Here the carriage stopped; and on payment of one shilling each, they were admitted into the enclosure. Inside they found a natural well, containing a great number of fish. The man who admitted them allowed them to feed the fishes, who came up with their great

mouths stretched to their utmost capacity, to receive the bits of bread thrown to them. In a smaller pool in the same enclosure were a quantity of angel fish. They looked very lovely swimming around and showing all the colors of the rainbow. The stay there was brief, as there was much that they wished to accomplish during the forenoon.

On they drove, until the former residence of the famous poet, Thomas Moore, was reached. Here they again left the carriage.

“I suppose they will expect two or three shillings here,” said Herbert, in a whisper to Agnes. “You cannot turn round without paying for it.”

They now entered the house of the poet, which, although altered in many respects since its occupancy by Moore, still had some of its originality left.

“When was Moore here?” inquired Mrs. Chapman.

“In 1803, ma’am,” said the guide.

After exploring the house, they started to walk to the famous Walsingham caves, which were on the same estate. On their way, Moore’s calabash tree was passed, under which the poet is said to have sat when he wrote his famous “Lalla Rookh.”

Herbert and Agnes followed the guide closely, while Mrs. Chapman and Louise took it more leisurely. The walk was beautiful. They passed under the shade of lemon and orange trees, the guide gathering some of the

leaves and fruit for them, although the latter were wild oranges and of no value for eating. This fruit had been cultivated to some extent on the islands, he said, but it was a thing of the past.

The latter part of the walk was rather rough, but Agnes had good help from Herbert. He took her hand and assisted her over all the bad places, so that they reached the cave some moments before the others, although they waited for them to come up before entering. The cave was quite a large one, containing a pool of water, which they were informed was very deep, although, owing to the extreme clearness of the water, it looked to be but a few feet in depth. That it had some underground connection with the ocean was shown by the fact that the water rose and fell with the tide. The roof and sides of the cave were covered with stalactites, which had been marred by being broken off for visitors.

The guide lighted a quantity of paper that he had brought with him for this purpose, to illuminate the place, but he only succeeded in giving it a still more weird appearance.

“How dreadful if one should slip and fall into that water!” said Louise, shuddering.

Agnes involuntarily drew back, but Herbert kept a tight hold of her. They all breathed more freely, however, when they were once more outside and had left the slippery rocks which surrounded the deep pool.

There was another cave, so the guide told them, which was longer, but contained no water. They did not care to go into it, but walked back to the house, under the shade of the lemon, orange, and coffee trees. Seated once more in the carriage, they began to discuss the attractions of Bermuda.

"I am sure I do not see why Thomas Moore could not be contented in such a place as this," said Agnes.

"Bermuda was too quiet for him," replied Louise.

"All the better, I should think."

"He evidently did not."

"There is the governor's residence," said the driver, pointing to a house that was set back from the road, surrounded by handsome grounds. "Shall we drive in?"

Being answered in the affirmative, he turned the horses in at the gate and drove slowly up the spacious driveway. The shrubs and flowers here were very fine, many of them being imported from still warmer countries. The tree called "monkey's puzzle," from its trunk being covered with thorns that projected in every direction, was quite common here.

Out on the public roadway once more, the horses made good time, and they reached home just as the other boarders were sitting down to dinner.

That afternoon they decided to rest. So with fancy-work and books they went out on the veranda. There

was considerable to be seen from there; they were able to look up and down the avenue over to the Park, and also to obtain a good view of Hamilton Hotel on its elevated site. Carriages and pedestrians passed the house continually, varied occasionally by a donkey cart or some one on horseback.

“Did you see those lovely red birds this morning when we were walking to the cave?” asked Agnes

“No,” said Louise. “Where were they?”

“Right in that clump of lemon trees, just before we reached the cave. They were beautiful.”

“What were they?”

“Cedar birds, so the guide said. They are quite common in the woods, and he said they even came in the trees that surround the houses. The birds here have handsome plumage, but do not amount to much as songsters.”

“Like a good many people in that respect,” said Herbert—“all outside show; don’t amount to anything else. You will find plenty of them in the hotel yonder, I’ll be bound.”

“I wish I were there myself, anyhow,” declared Louise. “There is ever so much style there.”

“Hang style! I say give me comfort. I am sure I am well suited where I am. You are always dissatisfied.”

Louise only replied by a toss of her head as she resumed her reading.

CHAPTER XI.

A BURDEN ON AGNES.

AGNES and Louise were not very much together. There seemed to be nothing in common between them ; so, although they always got along comparatively well, there was nothing to draw the one to the other. Neither were there any other young ladies among the few boarders at the house. So it came about that Agnes saw Herbert constantly. He seemed to like to be with her, and she found him much more companionable than his sister. As Agnes saw more and more of him, she became very anxious for him to become a Christian.

The first she ever thought about it in particular was one day when she was sitting alone with him in the parlor. He was certainly attractive in both looks and manners, and she knew him to be talented as well. He was also earnest about whatever interested him, and the thought came to her—"If he were only a Christian, what a power he might be for good!" Then she wondered if he had ever thought of the matter. Had any one ever talked earnestly to him about his soul's welfare! Somehow she thought it very doubtful. It came upon her like a great burden, the wish that he were a Christian. She

believed this wish to be God-given, and therefore would not try to check it. Had not the Lord given her a work to do in this direction? It was not an easy thing for her to undertake. She feared he would not understand her at all. She knew what his surroundings had been; yet she could but try. She remembered her experience with Jane some years before, and would not let the impression pass unheeded. She did not know what to say, or how or when to say it, but she believed the Lord would make it plain. So she watched, prayed, and waited. She prayed more earnestly than she ever remembered to have prayed for any one before.

It was one Sunday when they had been in Bermuda but a short time. Tea was just over, and the boarders strolled into the parlor or out upon the veranda. Herbert and Agnes were among the latter.

“Would you go to church with me this evening, Cousin Herbert?” asked Agnes.

“Well, I don’t know; I am not in the habit of attending church very often, but if you desire company, I will go with you.”

“Thank you. I should like company very much.”

So it was, that about half an hour later, Agnes came down to the parlor and found Herbert in readiness to accompany her.

“Are you going to walk?” asked Mrs. Chapman, looking up from her book.

“Going to walk to church!” said Herbert, significantly.

“Good land! You have not been to church before for a year, I’ll wager!”

“I’m going now, though.” And with this the two left the room.

It was warm and pleasant out of doors. The twilight was beginning to deepen, although darkness had not yet settled down on the landscape. Agnes was rather a silent companion during the walk to church, but her thoughts were active in the mean time.

“You have not been to church before for a year!” How the words rang in her ears! A year had passed since the cousin she was becoming so attached to had entered the doors of a church to attend service, and, indeed, she doubted his ever having attended much. How she lifted up her heart in prayer that this evening something might be said or done that should make an impression for good on the apparently thoughtless young man.

The bell that had been sounding its peal of invitation since they left the house stopped its ringing just as they entered the church. The usher seated them pretty well forward. Agnes did not know whether Herbert would like that or not, but however he felt, he raised no objections.

In a short time the minister rose and gave out a hymn;

then followed prayer, reading of the Scripture, and another hymn, and then he announced his text. It was but one sentence, containing a few words, but there was a world of meaning expressed in them. It was the question asked by Pilate, in the twenty-second verse of the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

Agnes listened attentively to every word of the sermon; but the listening was principally for another. How would it impress Herbert? How would he take this and that truth? Whether he liked or disliked what was said, his manner betrayed nothing. He was respectful and attentive; that was all. Whether the truth made any impression on him or not, Agnes could not determine.

"My friends," the minister said, after repeating his text for the second time, "this was the question asked by Pilate of the Jews more than eighteen hundred years ago. Possibly you may think it has nothing to do with people of this enlightened nineteenth century. We will consider that later.

"The Jews, being unable by their own authority to put an offender to death, brought the much-abused, long-suffering Saviour to Pilate, clamoring that as he had the power, he should make way with him. Pilate, reluctant to comply with their request, because according to his own testimony he found no fault in him, offered to release

unto them a prisoner, Barabbas or Jesus. You all know whom they chose; and it was then that Pilate asked this question, 'What then shall I do with *Jesus?*' And it was then that the people, mad with rage, cried out, 'Let him be crucified!'

"You think it was a very cruel thing in them to do. You think, had you been there how differently you would have done. Well, my dear unsaved friend, the same question is asked of you, What will *you* do with Jesus?"

"Do you think to escape the responsibility of deciding the question by simply ignoring it? If you are doing that, you *are* answering it just as much as those Jews did who cried out, 'Let him be crucified!' Is it not in fact more contemptible to ignore a person, to say by silence, 'I will have nothing whatever to do with you,' than to say so by words?"

"Every one must answer the question for himself or herself in some way. What will *I* do with Jesus? Will I let him into my heart to reign there as King of kings? Will I let him bring me peace and comfort, and by-and-by give me a home in glory; or will I have nothing to do with him?"

Thus he continued for some little time. Agnes did not see how any one who was not a Christian could help being touched.

The sermon closed, they sang another hymn, and then the minister announced a short prayer meeting to be held

directly after. He hoped that all who possibly could would stay.

What should Agnes do? Would it be wisdom to ask her cousin to stay to a prayer meeting? She hesitated; the people who would not stay were already going out. She turned round and looked at him; something seemed to give her courage.

“Cousin Herbert,” she said, “would you mind staying to the prayer meeting with me? It will only last half an hour; and I am very anxious to stop. I have not been to a prayer meeting since I left home.”

“I will stay with you if you wish it,” he said, seating himself again.

“Thank you very much. You do not mind, do you?”

“No.”

In a moment the people were singing “There is a fountain filled with blood.” Then the minister offered prayer—a prayer that seemed to come from the very depths of his heart, and melt the whole audience. There were a few remarks after this, but they were very brief. Then the meeting was opened to any one.

There was one of the soldiers from the barracks who spoke. His words were earnest and to the point. Then an old colored woman rose with tears streaming from her eyes, and told what the Lord had done for her, and begged, if there were any unsaved souls in the house, that they would come and give their hearts to the

Saviour. She was very much in earnest, and emphasized what she said by clapping her hands together. Agnes did not know what Herbert would think of this. She looked at him, but was still unable to draw any inference as to his feelings. There were some other testimonies, among which were a few words from another colored woman, whom Agnes recognized as the friend who had given her the flowers. Then the minister rose, and in a few words that were eloquent with earnestness, urged any one who might be within sound of his voice, who had not said, "I will take Christ as my Saviour," to do so at once. They did not know how long the Spirit would strive with them. They did not know but that very night they might be called to appear before their Maker, to render an account of the deeds done in the body. Then he related an incident that he knew to be true.

"It was some years ago," he said, "and there were revival meetings held in a little country schoolhouse of a certain village. The young people, and even the boys and girls, of the place attended. Among the number were three young lads, who were schoolmates and friends, who went night after night. They sat side by side; all became interested, and all rose for prayers; not once, but again and again. One was converted. The other two decided to postpone the matter. One of these lived to grow up and become a drunkard and an immoral man.

The third moved from the village. A few years later, and this young man lay tossing upon a bed of sickness and pain. The physician had told him that he could not recover, and great was his distress; yet it was not of body, but of mind. In vain his friends tried to lead him to Jesus. In vain they tried to point him to the Saviour of the world, that Jesus might become *his* Saviour. To all their entreaties he could only cry out, 'Too late, too late! I might have been saved once. In those meetings in the little county schoolhouse I knew by duty, and refused to do it. It is no use now!'

"His friends pleaded with him; but in vain. 'I tell you it is no use,' he cried, 'it is *too late!* But I want you to go back and tell all my friends and acquaintances my experience, and urge them to be wise.' And so, amid dreadful darkness, his life went out.

"My dear unsaved friends, beware of sinning away the day of grace. Now we will sing a hymn, and while we sing, if there is one here who has a desire to become a Christian, will you not rise, and we will pray for you."

There was a moment's silence, then some one started the hymn:

"Why do you wait, dear brother?
Oh, why do you tarry so long?
Your Saviour is waiting to give you
A place in his sanctified throng."

Did Herbert start? Agnes could not tell. She fan-

ced that he moved uneasily; but it might have been *only* fancy. No one rose; and when the hymn was finished, the minister spoke once more.

“No one has risen,” he said. “Yet I am confident that there are those here who should have done so—who *would* have done so; but they lacked the courage. They have not asked us to pray for them; but let us do so, nevertheless. Let us each, all who are Christians, take some *one* on our hearts, and pray earnestly for that one. Will Brother Case lead in prayer?”

Agnes bowed her head and prayed. She heard but little of the prayer Brother Case offered. She had a burden herself. She prayed as she had but seldom prayed before; and was not aware the speaker had finished until the people rose to sing. It was a simple air that they sang, but it nearly melted her to tears; and it was with difficulty that she maintained any degree of composure.

The singing ended, and the people left the church. Agnes felt as though she could not speak. So they walked along a few moments in silence, broken at length by Herbert, who asked:

“What did that minister mean, anyway?”

“Mean? What about?” said Agnes.

“Why, when he asked any one to rise while the people sang.”

“He meant that if there were any there who wished to be Christians, and desired the prayers of Christians,

they should manifest it by rising, They often give that invitation at the close of a meeting. Did you never hear it before?"

"I don't know that I ever attended a prayer-meeting before."

Agnes' heart sank. She really feared it would be altogether useless to say anything to him. Yet she *must* do *her* part.

"Cousin Herbert," she said, and her voice trembled with earnestness, "I have thought sometimes that you might look upon religion as a gloomy thing; knowing that Christians are not expected to be of the world. But I want to say, from my own experience, that the Lord Jesus Christ far more than compensates for all I have ever given up for him. I never knew the meaning of real, true happiness until I found it in him. I wanted you to know that, although I did not think some things right for a Christian to indulge in, yet I am very happy."

"I never doubted it," said Herbert, in a low tone.

"I wish that every one were as happy." Then, after a moment's pause: "Oh, Cousin Herbert, I do wish you were as happy! Would you not like to be not only happy, but *safe*?"

He made no reply, save to draw her hand a little further through his arm. And a few more steps brought them to the gate.

He accompanied Agnes to the head of the stairs, and

detained her there a moment with her hand still on his arm. Then, looking into her face, he said :

“I always admired your religious principles, Agnes, from the time I knew you at the Springs. I believe *you* are a Christian, if ever there were one ; and if I ever do make any professions, I hope I may be as sincere as you. Good-night.”

With that he left her. She found her way to her room, paused a moment before the door, entered, and closed the door behind her. Then she threw herself on her knees, and poured out her prayers and her tears together. The burden of the former was : “ O Lord, show him the way, and make him willing to walk in it.”

CHAPTER XII.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

AGNES was sitting in her room one day, when there came a quick rap at the door. She rose and opened it, and in walked Louise. She was evidently excited about something, for she did not take the seat that was offered her; but stood still in the centre of the floor.

“Well,” she said, as soon as Agnes had seated herself, “who do you suppose is at the Hamilton?”

“I am sure I do not know. Some friend of yours?”

“No other than Miss Van Alsten. I am delighted.”

Agnes' face showed no particular delight.

“It was by the merest chance,” continued her cousin, “that I found out about it. I was down street this morning, on a little shopping expedition, when who should walk into the store but Florence Van Alsten and her mother. She was pleased to see me, and I, of course, was equally glad to see her. You don't look very much pleased about it, though, it seems to me.”

“You forget that Miss Van Alsten was never an intimate friend of mine. I had but a slight acquaintance with her. You would be glad to see her, of course, knowing her as well as you did.”

“She was dressed in a very stylish mode. I do think all the Van Alstens are so stylish. Florence asked me to call on her. She did not want me to wait for ceremony, but invited me to come this afternoon; and I want you to go with me. I can't bear to go up to a strange hotel alone.”

“Thank you; but I think I would rather not. Our acquaintance is so slight, I think she would hardly expect me to call.”

“I want you to go, though. Now do not be disobliging, Agnes. I can't bear to go up there alone. Do say ‘yes,’ won't you?”

“Well, I suppose I can go, to accommodate you; although I should prefer to be excused,” said Agnes, reluctantly.

“That's right. We will start by half-past three. And, Agnes,”—putting her head inside the door again, after she had stepped into the entry,—“I do hope you will dress up nicely. The Van Alstens think so much of dress, you know.”

Agnes' cheeks flamed, but she said nothing. She was tempted again and again to tell her cousin she would not go, after all; but half-past three found her in readiness. She dreaded the call very much; for she could not forget her experience at the Springs. And somehow she felt that the young lady she was going to see would not be overjoyed at meeting her again.

They mounted the steps that led up to the Hamilton, and without much difficulty succeeded in finding their way into the reception room. They rang the bell, and a colored waiter soon made his appearance, who, on learning their errand, bowed low, received their cards on a silver tray, and departed. He soon returned, however, to say that Miss Van Alsten would be down to see the ladies presently. In the mean time, Agnes looked around. The view from the windows was very fine; but that was the only recommendation the hotel had to her. The furnishings, indeed, were faultless; but her experience as a child came over her to such an extent, that she almost wished herself safely outside again.

The surroundings seemed to have an entirely different effect on Louise. She became enthusiastic as she looked at them, and declared that it was really too bad her mother would not consent to stay there; the style was so elegant, and everybody who pretended to be anything stayed here.

Her talk was cut short at this juncture by the entrance of Miss Van Alsten. She was delighted to see Miss Chapman, but greeted Agnes somewhat coolly. She bowed stiffly, and gave her the tips of her fingers, then settled herself in an easy chair. From that time until they left, her conversation was directed almost entirely to Louise. Indeed, she scarcely spoke to her other visitor, except to inquire how Miss Rice enjoyed

her present boarding place. And Agnes could not help feeling a slight touch of sarcasm in the way it was asked.

To Louise, she expatiated on the merits of the hotel. The hops were something fine; really better than those they had at the Springs. Then she gave an account of the distinguished guests, and of one of the governor's receptions she had attended.

While she had been talking, Agnes had been taking a general survey of her. Her dress was of some light stuff, made in the most approved style. She wore six or eight bangles on each arm; a number of finger rings, with which she played almost constantly while talking; a large bunch of ornaments on a rather showy watch-chain; and a silver dagger, set with rubies, thrust through her collar. Then her hair was braided, puffed, and curled, and held in place by another, a larger, silver dagger.

The conversation not being particularly edifying, Agnes was not sorry when Louise rose to go. Once outside, she again commenced to talk about the desirableness of being at the hotel; but Agnes, only too thankful to be where they were, paid but little heed to her talk.

On reaching home, Herbert accosted them, and inquired if they had been to see that stuck-up Miss Van Alsten. Louise, not in an altogether good mood before, grew angry, and made some unpleasant retorts; but he

declared that the aforesaid Miss Van Alsten was just as disagreeable as need be, even if her father was worth millions; and he did not see how his sister could endure her. Agnes listened to the discussion for a few moments, and then retreated to her own room.

A few days after this, Herbert and Agnes were out in the park enjoying another band concert. It was nearly through, and a few of the people had already taken their departure. The two cousins were walking up and down one of the board paths, when a gentleman passed them. Agnes gave a quick start, and turned to look after him. He had passed them, but stopped and retraced his steps. For a moment Agnes was uncertain whether she knew him or not; then all doubt vanished as he smiled and lifted his hat. She took the hand he offered her, and exclaimed:

“Why, Mr. Leighton!”

“Miss Rice, this is an unexpected pleasure,” he said.

Agnes hardly knew what to say; so she introduced Herbert.

“Mr. Leighton, allow me to make you acquainted with my cousin, Mr. Chapman.”

Mr. Leighton bowed graciously, and shook hands. Herbert, for some reason, did not seem much pleased at the meeting. He was reserved, and, as Agnes thought, almost cold.

“May I ask where you are stopping,” said the newcomer, presently.

“Just over yonder. I should be pleased to have you call.”

“Thank you. If you will do me the favor to give me the name of the house, I shall be pleased to do so.”

She told him, and he wrote it on the back of a card. A few words more, and he left them.

Agnes looked at Herbert, a thing she had not ventured to do since the introduction. There was an ominous frown visible on his face. A moment's silence, and then he asked:

“Who was that fellow?”

“A gentleman whom I met at a party a few months ago.”

“Have you never seen him but that once?”

“No.”

“Good land, Agnes! Don't you know any better than to speak to him, then? You have no means of knowing what he is. He may be a perfect scamp. I am afraid you are altogether too credulous.”

“Cousin Herbert,” said she, stopping and laying her hand on his arm, “you are mistaken. I know this much; he is a servant of the Lord Jesus.”

Herbert muttered something nearly unintelligible, and finally said:

“You need not have introduced me as your cousin, anyway. What possessed you, Agnes?”

“I am very sorry if I offended you,” said she. “I did not know you were ashamed of the relationship. I will be more careful in the future.”

“You know it is not that,” he burst forth. “You know I am proud of you, Agnes; more proud of you by far than of my own sister. But why need you advertise to every one our relationship? Let them think what they like. Besides, we are not *own* cousins. It is only your father and my mother who are cousins.”

“I know it,” said Agnes, opening her eyes in surprise; “but you always call me ‘cousin,’ and I had no idea you objected to my calling you that.”

“I know it too; but let that be a thing of the past, won’t you? Call me Herbert, now.”

“I will try and please you, certainly.”

“I suppose now, that fellow will be hanging round the house, and you will want no more of me. I had made up my mind to go to meeting whenever you went, but probably you won’t want me now.” And there was a little shade of bitterness in his tone.

“Herbert, you know better,” said Agnes. “You know I had rather have you to go to meeting with me than any one else I know of. I shall want you company just as much as ever. I think a great deal of you, Herbert.”

He brightened up somewhat at this, saying:

“I am glad to hear that. I did not know that you would want much more of me if you had him.”

While they had been talking they had left the park, and strolled down the street away from their boarding place. They had paid no special heed as to where they were going, only walking to keep company with their talk. They now found themselves in a lane, shaded by oleander bushes. The tall shrubs grew on either side, and were just blossoming out into fragrance and beauty.

“How lovely!” said Agnes.

Herbert reached up and broke off a spray of the blossoms for her.

“Just think,” she said, “how hard the people at home work to raise one puny little bush of this, and see how large and how freely they grow here. The people do not seem to think much of them, either.”

“That is the way with a good many things,” said her companion, “what some prize more than all else, others do not value at all. But come, we must go home now. It is very nearly tea time.”

So the two retraced their steps in much less time than it took them to come, and with much less conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CONFESSION.

THE days slipped rapidly by, until another Sunday had arrived. Herbert, good as his word, accompanied Agnes to church, both forenoon and evening. This sudden disposition on his part to attend divine service occasioned some remark on the part of his mother and sister. As he was going to the evening meeting, Louise questioned him in regard to his destination, and on being informed that he was bound for church, burst into a laugh.

“For pity’s sake, Herbert!” she said, “what has come over you? I never knew you to go to church twice a day before; indeed, you rarely go once. I really believe you must be getting religious. He must have caught it from you, Agnes; although I never knew before that it was contagious.”

Herbert’s eye flashed, and he had a retort ready for his sister, but a look from Agnes silenced him. They passed out, and Herbert said, in a confidential tone, to Agnes, that he did not think a little religion would hurt Louise.

The meeting was about the same as the previous week.

Somehow Agnes felt no hesitancy this time in asking her cousin to stay to the prayer meeting, and he certainly seemed willing.

When the services were ended, and they were out in the street once more, Herbert proposed a walk. He did not feel like going directly home, so they took a more circuitous way. They had been but a few steps, when it became apparent to Agnes that her companion had something on his mind. He seemed uneasy, and once or twice was on the point of speaking, but hesitated. Finally, he exclaimed :

“I want to tell you something, Agnes, that has been troubling me for the past week.”

Then he stopped, as though at a loss just how to proceed. Agnes waited patiently, merely saying :

“I shall be very glad to help you, if I can.”

“Well, it’s just this,” said he, at length, “I have been thinking of what the minister said last Sunday night, and of what you said also ; and I have come to the conclusion that I am not in a very safe position. The fact is, Agnes, I am not ready to die. Not that I am sick or have any special premonition of such a thing ; but, of course, none of us can tell when it will come ; and you see,” clearing his throat, “I should like to feel that I was ready whenever it was.”

Agnes’ heart was almost too full for utterance. There was a great lump in her throat, and when at

last she did answer him, it was with no very steady voice.

“I am very glad to hear you say that, Herbert. Very glad you feel your need, I mean. I have longed very much for you to become a Christian.”

“I knew you were anxious, and I only wish I could feel as secure as you seem to be. I don't know how it happened to come over me so all at once. I never used to trouble myself much about such things, although I will say that your life at the Springs did set me to thinking a little. I saw you were different from every one else round there; but I soon forgot about it, until I saw you again. As I said before, I don't know what makes me feel so, but it seems to me I can never cross the water to go home until the question is settled.”

“Oh, Herbert,” said his cousin, fairly breaking down, this time, “I have prayed so earnestly for this; now I know the Lord has answered my prayer. I believe if you feel like that, you will keep on seeking until you find.”

“Wouldn't mother and Louise be surprised if I were 'to become religious,' as they call it? I don't care, though; this is more important than what they will think or say.”

Agnes felt a secret dread of having them know. She wondered if Herbert would stand up under their ridicule. Then she remembered that whenever he set himself to

accomplish a thing he generally did it; and more than that, he was not to enter the contest alone.

“There is one thing,” said he, presently, “that I am afraid I could never do, and that is to stand up in meeting and ask them to pray for me.”

“Then do you know that is just what you will have to do? Not that the mere act of rising there is necessary to salvation, but that is the point where your will has taken a stand. You say, ‘I can do everything but that.’ The Lord demands an *entire surrender* of your will to him—a willingness to do everything that he commands.”

“Then you think I shall have to do it before I can ever be a Christian?”

“I think if you have made up your mind that you are unwilling to do it, you will never find peace until you submit. No one can have perfect peace with a knowledge of something between him and the Lord, however slight that something may be.”

“It is hard for me to give up a point. Mother always said that I had an adamantine will.”

“The Lord can subdue it, if you are willing he should.”

“Am I not willing?”

“I am almost afraid you are not.”

Silence again for a moment. Then the young man said;

“What can make me willing?”

“The grace of God.” The answer was low and sweet; but it stung him like an arrow. He seemed to see how far above him his cousin was. She stood on a lofty plain, he on a very low one.

“I wish I was not so stubborn,” he said, at length.

“If you really wish so, the Lord will help you to overcome it. The trouble with a great many people is, they are not really in earnest. I believe an unknown number of souls have been lost just for that reason. They are perfectly *willing* the Lord should save them, so they think, and imagine that is sufficient, instead of being *desperately in earnest* about it. The Lord says, ‘Ye shall seek me, and find me, *when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*’”

“And so you think I am not in earnest?”

“I did not say that. I sincerely hope you are. Oh, I do hope you are!” And the voice was unsteady again.

“And you think the Lord would make me willing to rise in meeting, if I really desired him to do so?”

“I do.”

“Will you pray for me, Agnes? I am afraid I do not know how myself.”

“I have. I have prayed for you very often, Herbert; and the Lord has answered my prayers thus far by sending his Holy Spirit to your heart. Oh, do not grieve him, will you?”

“I trust not.”

They had reached the gate by this time. As they entered the house, Herbert stepped to the parlor door. The lights were burning, but no one was there. He looked at Agnes, hesitated, and finally said:

“Would you be willing to come in here and pray with me, Agnes?”

The question was entirely unexpected. She seemed for a moment to be rooted to the spot. Could she comply with his request?

It was only for a moment, and then she entered the room with him, and going to the sofa, knelt down by it, and poured out her heart in prayer that the Lord would lead her cousin, and make him willing to be led. When they rose, they were both in tears. There was no more conversation that night; but for some minutes Herbert stood there, with her hand in his, struggling for composure. Then with a simple “good-night,” they parted.

The prayer offered in the parlor was only the beginning of the petitions that Agnes sent up to the throne of grace that night. Whether Herbert prayed for himself or not, she did not know; but she had faith to believe that he did.

CHAPTER XIV.

OTHER DAYS.

THE next day was bright and fair, and Mrs. Chapman concluded that it would be a good day to visit the reefs. So after breakfast they all went down to the wharf, where a row boat was chartered, and with a good-natured colored boy to row them, they set out.

There was something delightfully strange in being out on the water in March, and the weather so warm that a parasol was indispensable, and wraps were discarded for a good part of the way.

After they had gone several miles, their conductor produced a water glass. This was pressed down on the surface of the water to quiet the ripples, and then the wonders of the deep were seen. An exclamation burst from the lips of all:

“Oh, how beautiful! How wonderful! Who ever imagined anything so pretty!”

It was certainly charming, and to one who had never seen anything of the kind before, extremely surprising. The seaweeds, mosses, shells, searods and urchins, and the coral, were all to be plainly seen, and with grappling irons many of the wonders were brought up for inspec-

tion. They were out all the forenoon, only reaching home in time for dinner. The sun had been warm, and the glare on the water trying, and Agnes found herself obliged to go to bed with a headache. It was quite severe, and for an hour or two she lay there with her temples throbbing. Mrs. Chapman came in and bathed her forehead, and finally she fell into a doze. How long she slept she did not know. She was awakened by a rap at the door. Jumping up and opening it, she found the servant with a card in her hand. She glanced at it. The inscription was—"Robert E. Leighton."

"Tell the gentleman I will be down presently," she said. And closing the door hastened to make her toilet. Her head was better, but it had left her pale and with a feeling of languor. She was not long in dressing, however, being one of those women who can dress quickly, and very acceptably too. So in a remarkably short space of time she entered the parlor. Mr. Leighton rose and advanced to meet her.

"You do not look well, Miss Rice," he said, placing a chair for her.

"I have been suffering with a severe headache, but am much better now."

"You have been sight seeing too much, I fear."

"I was out on the water this forenoon, and the heat and glare from the sun were intense."

"I should judge they might be. You must be careful.

how you expose yourself. This is quite an unexpected pleasure that I have of calling on you way down here. How long since you came, may I ask?"

"We have been here several weeks. I was equally surprised to find you here."

"I presume so. I am almost surprised myself. I came quite unexpectedly, partly on business and partly for my health. I have been quite ill since I saw you at your own home."

"I am sorry to hear that. Has this mild climate helped you?"

"Greatly. Even in the short time I have been here I can see a marked improvement. I was nearly well when I came, but my physician thought a change would be beneficial, and as I could accomplish a little something here in the line of business too, I decided to come to Bermuda."

"I trust you are not disappointed in the place."

"Happily so—that is all."

"I had no idea myself of the beauty of the islands until I came here. It seems almost like fairyland."

"You are with friends, I believe?"

"Yes, with cousins."

There was a little hesitancy as she uttered the last part of the sentence. What Herbert had said flashed across her mind, but she knew no reason why she should not answer a plain question.

"I believe the young gentleman you introduced me to in the Park is your cousin?"

"He is—that is, his mother and my father are cousins."

"I see. There is a great deal of character in his face."

"He has a strong character, Mr. Leighton. I only hope he may use it in the right direction."

"Is he a Christian?"

"He is not at the present, but I trust he may be. He has lately become interested."

"That is good news."

"I wish you would remember him in your prayers. He has a strong will to overcome, and I fear will meet with much opposition."

"I shall most certainly bear your request in mind."

"Shall you be in Bermuda long?"

"Probably for several weeks more. I cannot say definitely how many. Have you been up to Prospect yet, to see the soldiers drill?"

"No, sir; I did not know about it. Do they drill often?"

"Every week, so I am told. Would you like to go?"

"Very much. I am very fond of any military display."

"Then may I count on the pleasure of your company day after to-morrow?"

"Thank you. I should be pleased to go."

Agnes had a certain feeling that Herbert would be

anything but pleased to have her go, though why he should object she did not know.

A few more remarks and the visitor rose to go, saying: "Then I will call for you with a carriage at half-past ten day after to-morrow."

She thanked him again; he shook hands cordially and departed.

Herbert did not see his cousin until the family assembled at the tea table, when unfortunately, as Agnes thought, Louise informed him that he had better look out for his cousin, as there had been a gentleman at the house that afternoon to see her. Herbert merely replied that he did not know as it was anything that concerned him, while Agnes heartily wished Louise would keep quiet.

"Oh, I did not know as you would allow her to receive attention from any one, that was all," said his sister.

"I presume Agnes can manage her own affairs without outside help," he replied, with considerable dignity.

Louise and her mother exchanged significant glances, which Agnes did not at all understand. Herbert made no more conversation during the meal.

As Agnes strolled out into the veranda after supper, she found Herbert there before her.

"Will you take a walk?" he asked.

"Yes, if you would like to."

"I will get your things for you; just wait here."

He soon returned with her hat, wrap, and gloves, and the two set out together. They walked on for some little way, neither saying very much, until Herbert said:

“I wish you would step in here with me.”

Agnes complied with his request, and found herself in a sort of jewelry store, although jewelry was by no means the only thing displayed there, as the cedar of the islands made up into beautiful boxes and ornaments of various sorts was to be seen. The show cases on one side of the room were filled with amber in different shapes and designs. There were pins, ear rings, beads, hair ornaments, and other articles too numerous to mention. Toward these cases Herbert made his way.

“I want you to help me to select a present,” he said to Agnes. Then he asked the shopkeeper to display one piece after another.

“Which do you think the prettier,” he asked, “the amber pins or the hair ornaments?”

“Of course, that is just as any one fancies. I like the pins better myself.”

“Which pattern?”

Agnes chose the one she preferred, and Herbert looked it over well.

“Is this the best one you have of that style?” he asked.

The shopkeeper declared it was as good a one as he had in the store—perfect in every respect.

“Then I will take it.”

He paid for it, and had it put up in a neat box. Out on the street once more, and he turned to Agnes.

“Will you accept this as a birthday gift?” he asked, placing it in her hand.

“Oh, Herbert, how very thoughtful of you! I had no idea you were choosing this for me, or I should not have been so free in my remarks. I did not know that you remembered it was my birthday to-day.”

“I generally remember what I am anxious to,” he said, dryly.

“Well, I am sure I thank you many times. It is a complete surprise. I had hardly thought about its being my birthday. How old I am getting! I can hardly realize that I am really nineteen.”

“Seven years older than when I first knew you. Say Agnes,” he exclaimed, suddenly changing the subject, “is that Leighton fellow anything to you?”

“Herbert!” And she stood still and looked at him.

“Well, is he?”

“How can you ask me such a question when I told you I had never met him but once until I saw him here in Bermuda?”

“Well, he might be something to you for all that.”

“If he might, he is not.”

“Really, Agnes?”

“Why, Herbert, do you doubt my word? We are nothing in the world but friends. I am very sorry you

should suggest such a thing. I would not have Mr. Leighton know it for the world. I do not know what he would think."

"Well, that's all right. I did not mean any harm. I hope you will not be offended."

"No, I am not offended, but I do not see what suggested such a thing to you."

"Oh, I presume I was foolish. Forget all about it, if you can, and we will say no more on the subject."

But Agnes could not easily forget it. Whatever could have put such a thought into her cousin's head, and why was he so concerned? She fell asleep musing on these questions and awoke the next morning thinking of them.

The day for the drill arrived, and Agnes was ready at the appointed hour. The drive, although not long, was extremely pleasant. From Prospect a fine view of Bermuda was obtained. They were a little early, so drove round and had a good chance to examine the barracks. It was all entirely new to Agnes, and something that interested her intensely. Presently the bugle sounded, and the soldiers began to assemble. They came from all directions, and took their places in line, where they were inspected by the officers, after roll call. Then they marched down to the parade grounds, the band taking the lead, and here for an hour or more they were drilled. They marched, filed, formed in a hollow square with fixed bayonets, as though defying any charge of cavalry, and

finally one company was sent out to skirmish, when it was each man for himself.

“I think I never saw anything much more interesting,” said Agnes, when at last it was over and they had turned homeward.

It was just before they reached the avenue that Mr. Leighton inquired how her cousin was getting along.

“He has not said anything since I last saw you,” said Agnes, “but I feel that the Spirit is working with him.”

“May he listen to his teachings. I presume you have a great amount of influence with him, Miss Rice—indeed, there is generally some one we can each exert more influence over than any other person, and I feel sure that your influence with him will be in the right direction.”

“I hope so, Mr. Leighton. I see a great deal of Herbert—indeed, we have been together most of the time since coming to Bermuda, and I feel an almost overwhelming desire to see him a Christian. I hope I may do my duty faithfully.”

“I trust you will.”

The house was reached by this time, and after helping her to alight, Mr. Leighton lifted his hat and drove away.

CHAPTER XV.

HERBERT'S DECISION.

HERBERT still continued to attend the meetings with Agnes, but he did not rise for prayers, neither did he say much to her on the subject, and she thought best to wait awhile and see what he would do if left to himself. She saw no more of Mr. Leighton, excepting as she accidentally met him on the street once or twice, at which times he seemed somewhat reserved; and he never stopped long to converse with her.

There remained but a week or two more for them to stop in Bermuda, when they went to church one Sunday evening as usual. The services were specially impressive. The testimonies this evening were chiefly in regard to the danger of procrastination, and at the close those present who were desirous of the prayers of Christians were invited to rise during the singing. Some one struck up a hymn, and they sang the first and last stanzas:

“ ‘Almost persuaded’ now to believe;
‘Almost persuaded’ Christ to receive;
Seems now some soul to say,
‘Go, Spirit, go thy way,
Some more convenient day,
On thee I’ll call.’

‘ ‘ Almost persuaded, ’ harvest is past !
 ‘ Almost persuaded, ’ doom comes at last !
 ‘ Almost ’ cannot avail ;
 ‘ Almost ’ is but to fail !
 Sad, sad, that bitter wail—
 ‘ Almost, *but lost !* ’ ”

Agnes had her head bowed during the singing, and she felt, rather than saw, the one at her side rise. Her heart thrilled with gratitude, but she did not raise her head until the end of the service, and when she did so, her eyes were wet with tears.

There were several people who came forward to speak with Herbert after the services had closed, including the minister, but Agnes could not say a word. Even after they had left the church and were alone, she said nothing. The silence was broken at length by Herbert :

“ Well, I did it. It was hard, but it is accomplished at last.”

Then she merely said: “ Praise the Lord.”

“ I did not know that I should ever get the courage,” he continued. “ But while they were singing that hymn, I glanced over it, and the last line caught my eye—‘ Almost—*but lost*’; and I thought, ‘ Is it possible that means me?’ I said, ‘ No. It shall not be my experience.’ And I rose.”

“ I have abundant proof that the Lord hears and answers prayer,” said Agnes, “ even if I had not known it before.”

“Yes, I believe he does. I know that I really desire to be saved. I do not mean only to be saved from punishment hereafter, but to be saved from sin. I think I really want to do what God would have me do, now and always. But I must always look to him for help. I hope you will pray that he will give me what I need.”

“When will you tell your mother and Louise how you feel?” asked Agnes.

“I do not know. I suppose I had better tell them soon. I wonder what they will say? I do not like to tell them; but putting off a disagreeable duty will not make it any easier. I know that by experience.”

“No. It only makes it harder.”

They walked on in silence a few steps. Then Herbert said, in a husky voice:

“I can never thank you enough, Agnes, for the interest you have taken in me. If you had not done so, I might never have been led to Christ. I never had any one speak to me on the subject of personal religion before; and you do not know how it touched me. You have been a great help to me.”

“To God be all the glory,” she replied, reverently.

The next morning Agnes looked inquiringly at Herbert. As soon as they were alone, he said:

“I have told mother and sister.”

“Have you? What did they say?”

“Sister laughed, and said she guessed it would not last

very long. Mother said she hoped to goodness it would last, for I needed something badly enough. She did not know whether religion was the thing or not; but if it would answer the purpose, she did not care what it was. She always thought I had a dreadful disposition, and I suppose I have. The fact is, neither of them believes it will amount to anything."

"I trust you will be able to show them that they are mistaken."

"I hope so. But it is hard to have your own folks so entirely lacking sympathy with you."

"There is a Bible verse that ought to comfort you, Herbert: 'God is our refuge and strength.'"

"Thank you for giving me that. I do not know much about the Bible yet; but I mean to learn."

"You will find it an unfailing source of comfort, consolation, wisdom, and cheer. It is a safe chart to take for life's rough voyage."

Agnes feared lest Mrs. Chapman or Louise would say something to her on the subject; but neither of them did. Whether they were displeased, unconcerned, or did not think it worthy of notice, one could not tell by their actions. Thus the days passed one after another, until but little more than a week remained for their stay. Then Agnes was seated in the parlor with her crochet-work, one afternoon, when the door was opened by the servant, who ushered in Mr. Leighton. She rose and

greeted him, and then said: "You are quite a stranger. I did not know whether you were still in Bermuda, or not."

"I leave to-morrow," he said.

"So soon! I am sorry for that."

"I have enjoyed some of the time exceedingly; but I am glad to return home now."

"I had hoped we might both go on the same steamer."

"Allow me to ask when you go?"

"A week from to-morrow; on the Orinoco."

"I presume you will meet your father by that time."

"I trust so. I think he is on his way home now. Mr. Leighton, I have good news for you. Herbert has come out into the light."

"That is indeed good news. I am very glad. When did he find peace?"

"A week or two ago. He has seemed very happy since."

"I trust he may always continue in the good way. Well, Miss Rice, I must not stop longer. I felt, however, that it would not be right for me to leave the place without a word to you."

"I should certainly have been very sorry if you had. But why must you hasten now?"

"I cannot stay longer, Miss Rice," he said, hesitating for a moment. "This is a beautiful place, but there is a fairer land than Bermuda, over yonder. I know

we are both bound for it; and trust that we shall meet there."

That was all. He shook hands and departed. Agnes said "good-bye." As he stepped down to the walk, he lifted his hat, and walked away without once looking up.

Agnes went back to the parlor. She picked up her work; but the ivory hook was not drawn through the worsted. She sat as though in deep meditation; and indeed she was. What did it all mean? Was it nothing but imagination, or had Mr. Leighton acted strangely? Why had he not called again until the eve of his departure? Had she offended him? She could not possibly think of anything she had done. Then she fell to blaming herself for indulging in such foolish thoughts. Why *should* he call and see her many times? What right had she, a comparative stranger, to expect it? Was it not really preposterous in her?

Finally she grew tired of thinking and imagining, and came to the conclusion that she knew nothing about it; and furthermore, that she was not likely to understand it.

CHAPTER XVI.

A REVELATION.

IT was the last day but one before the sailing of the steamer. After tea, Herbert proposed to Agnes that they take their usual walk. It was a lovely evening; the moon was full, and bright as a moon of that climate can be. They walked for some distance this evening; first down by the water, and then in quite an opposite direction.

“Mother said that Florence Van Alsten was here this afternoon,” said Herbert. “Did you see her?”

“No.”

“I do not blame you. You do not like her much better than I do, I think.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I believe it; and I think you have every reason not to like her.”

“We ought to like every one.”

“I do not see how that is possible.”

Agnes was silent.

“How can we like any one who is positively disagreeable?”

“There is a Power that can enable us to do it.”

“Do you always?”

“I am afraid I do not always; but I wish I did.”

“Then you are a step beyond me; for there are some folks that I really do not want to like.”

“You ought to.”

“I suppose I ought; but I do not.”

There was silence again, broken by Herbert.

“Say, Agnes, do you think I am very bad?”

“I think there has been a great change in you, for the better.”

“That is encouraging. I am glad you think so. Mother asked me, the other day, if I was going to take my religion home with me, or leave it when I left you.”

“What did you say?”

“I was excited at first. Then I thought that if I got angry, she would ask me where all my religion was; so I only told her that I would try and keep it.”

“I hope you will, Herbert.”

“I hope so. You must help me. I need help very much. Mother and sister only sneer at the whole thing. But here we are back, and I do not feel at all like going in. Let us walk a little farther.”

“I am too tired to go farther to-night.”

“Well, do not go in, anyway. It is too fine out for that. Come up on the upper veranda; there is not a soul any where round there, and it is very pleasant.”

Agnes complied. There were plenty of easy chairs

there, and she was in no haste to go into the house herself. They sat there for some time without saying much. Both seemed absorbed in thought. Then Herbert said :

“Do you realize that we have but one night more after this to spend in Bermuda?”

“That is just what I was thinking.”

“I wish,” said Herbert, “we were going to stay just twice as long.”

Agnes noticed that he turned his face from her as he said this, but thought nothing special of his action.

“I would like to stay longer,” she said, “but I long to see papa and the folks at home.”

“There is no one at home that *I* care to see. I wish we were going to stay a month longer. I have been happier since I have been here than I ever was before.”

“I am glad we have such a pleasant event to remember our visit here by. Just think! It was here you first saw the dawn of spiritual light.”

“Yes; I shall always revert to it with great pleasure; then too, we have enjoyed so much together.”

“Indeed we have. Do you know, Herbert, you seem almost like a brother to me. I never had a brother, but I think you come as near to it as could be. I sometimes wish we really were brother and sister.”

Herbert's face had been turned away all this time; now he suddenly looked her full in the face.

“I do not,” he exclaimed, with emphasis. “I wish

something entirely different, and something that is possible. Do you know, Agnes," and he took her hands in his, "I wish you were my wife. Will you be?"

Agnes sat as one dazed. All power of speech or action seemed taken from her. He sat there looking steadily at her, and finally said:

"You have not answered my question yet; will you?"

Once, twice she opened her mouth as if to speak, but no words came; then she burst out into tears. She wept until it seemed she could weep no longer. Herbert was powerless to check her.

"Don't; please don't," he urged. "You will make yourself ill, besides bringing the whole house out here to see what is the trouble."

Finally she succeeded in partially controlling herself. Then, and not until then, did she speak.

"What have I done?" she sobbed.

"Done? Why, you have done nothing. What do you mean?"

"Oh, Herbert, I never dreamed of this. I had no idea you looked at things in that light. I thought of you as a dear friend, as a cousin—no—more than that, as a brother; and I have been mistaken all along. I have been taking what I am unable to give in return. Oh, dear! what shall I do?"

"Do you mean you do not love me, Agnes?"

“No; not that. I love you very, *very* much; but not in the *way* you desire, or the way you love me.”

There was silence a moment, broken only by sobs from one, and a deep sigh from the other. Then Herbert said, and his voice sounded exceedingly sad and hopeless, “So you cannot be my wife, Aggie?”

“No; oh, no! I never thought you had such an idea. I have been blind, but believe me when I say I was not willfully so; it was all a dreadful mistake.”

“I wish I were dead,” said Herbert.

“Do not; oh, pray, do not!” said Agnes, with tears streaming down her face. “It is very wrong in you to say that. It is my fault. I take the blame on myself; but do not say anything of that kind.”

“No; you are *not* to blame; but I am a fool. I ought to have known better. Do not reproach yourself.”

“But I cannot help it. I feel as though I could not forgive myself; yet I did not mean it.”

“Of course, you did not. I do not blame you, only I wish—I really wish now I had never seen Bermuda. I have loved you all the time we have been here; and I think I *always* admired you from a child. I wish you had not been so good to me, and then, perhaps, I might have been spared this myself, and also have been spared giving you pain; but I would give all I am worth if you loved me as I love you.” And the last few words ended in a suppressed sob.

They sat there a long time without speaking. Herbert had her hands in his; but his face was turned away. No one came to disturb them, and the moments passed, one after another. Finally Agnes rose to go into the house. Pausing a moment, she said, in a low voice:

“Herbert, you will keep close to the Master?”

“I shall try.”

“You will always find a friend in him.”

“I shall miss you dreadfully when I go to meeting,”

“But you will go?”

“Yes; for it is right; and I shall try to do my duty.”

Then they entered the house together. In the entry they paused; no one was anywhere near. Herbert still had her hands in his, while his eyes were fixed on her face.

“Agnes,” he said, “is—is there any one else?”

“No, Herbert, no; it is not that at all.”

“Then, in time, can you not return my love?”

“Not in the way you mean. In one way I love you dearly; but in that way only. Can’t we be dear friends, and nothing more?”

He shook his head, sadly, and turned away.

Agnes during that night shed tears more bitter than any she had shed since her mother’s death. She reproached herself for not having seen things in their true light; and she excused herself on the ground of her complete innocency. Then she wept because she had caused pain to one whom she loved, and because the only brother

she had ever known was to be separated from her. If he would only be content to be just friends, and nothing more. But she knew him too well to expect that.

The visit that had been so much to her, and that she had enjoyed from the very first, was to end in bitterness. Sleep did not soon come to her relief. But toward morning tired nature asserted her rights, and she slept; but on a pillow wet with tears.

The next morning it was a great effort to rise, for she felt tired, and her head ached severely; but she must do nothing that would arouse the suspicion of either Mrs. Chapman or Louise. She felt sure Herbert would not wish them to know what had occurred, and no more did she. So she hastened to prepare for breakfast. The others had just seated themselves at the table when she entered. Casting a hasty glance round the company, she saw that they were all present, Herbert included; but she did not dare look any one in the face, so she slipped quietly into her seat, with a simple "good-morning."

"Why, Agnes, how pale you look!" exclaimed Louise.

"I have a headache this morning."

"I should say you had. You do not look as though you had slept a wink all night."

"Then my looks are deceitful."

Mrs. Chapman and Louise chatted gayly during the meal with the other boarders. Herbert and Agnes said but little, though once or twice Agnes tried to join in

the conversation, lest her silence should become noticeable, but she had such poor success that she concluded it would be safer for her to keep silent. As soon as Herbert had finished his breakfast, he left the table.

“I wonder what is the matter with Herbert,” said his mother; “he looks glum, and will scarcely speak when he is spoken to.”

“I don’t know, unless perhaps he is homesick at the thoughts of leaving Bermuda,” said Louise.

Agnes swallowed hard; it seemed that every mouthful must certainly choke her; but it would not do for her to leave the table. She must at least keep up an appearance of eating. But as soon as possible she made her escape.

She spent much of the day in her room, packing; she would greatly have preferred spending it in bed, but the packing must be done. As for Herbert, she saw but little of him, excepting at meal times. She noticed then that he looked poorly, and several times she felt that she should certainly burst into tears.

“Is not your head any better?” inquired Louise, at tea time.

“I think not.”

“You must get a good night’s rest to-night, or you will be scarcely able to start to-morrow.”

Which advice Agnes feared it would be difficult for her to follow.

CHAPTER XVII.

TAKING LEAVE OF BERMUDA.

THE day dawned fair and lovely. All passengers to leave on the steamer Orinoco were to be aboard by ten o'clock. There was a brisk wind blowing from the north, but not enough to give any cause for apprehension to those who dreaded rough water, especially as the steamer carried a heavy cargo of onions and potatoes this trip, which caused her to settle well down into the water. All heavy baggage had been put aboard the previous night, only stateroom trunks and hand baggage remaining to be carried aboard in the morning. The passengers were well laden with flowers and plants, from the most beautiful roses to the common wild flopper.

It was with a sinking heart that Agnes crossed the bridge and stepped on the deck of the steamer. Herbert had walked with her all the way, carrying her wraps and showing every little attention possible, but saying almost nothing. Now, as she stepped from the shore to the bridge, and realized that it was probably the last time her foot would ever press Bermudian soil, she felt completely overcome. She struggled bravely with her feelings, however, and after leaving her various parcels in

the stateroom, went back to the deck to occupy the few remaining moments in gazing at her surroundings.

In a few moments more they were swinging slowly round away from the dock. And soon the Orinoco started slowly away from the town of Hamilton, with its white houses, away from the islands lovely with verdure; from waving palms and cocoanuts; from the place that had been to Agnes what no place ever had been before, or ever would be again. She felt as though she were leaving a part of herself there, something that she could never separate from that little oceanic paradise.

The water was blue and sparkling, just as it was the morning they first saw it, and Agnes sat and watched it and the receding shore for a long time. That afternoon she spent in her stateroom, but after that she was able to be on deck until the day they landed.

She and Herbert would sit together on the hurricane deck for hours; but on such occasions there was but little said by either one. They would sit gazing on the vast extent of water that was spread out before them in all directions. Nothing of an unpleasant nature was alluded to; but Agnes had never seen Herbert look so sad, and he could notice a troubled look on the face of his companion. Louise seemed to observe it also, and once or twice tried to ascertain the cause, but with little success. Agnes could not help wondering whether either she or her mother had any suspicion as to the real state of affairs; she



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Step by Step.

sometimes fancied that they did, but could not tell. The hours wore away one after another until the third morning dawned and the passengers awoke to find that they were within a few hours of New York. There was packing of bags and trunks and gathering up of various bundles, after which and the hurried breakfast nearly every one went out on deck to see the steamer come up to the dock. When their pier was reached, Agnes eagerly scanned the faces on it, until one dear, familiar countenance was recognized. The moments seemed like hours while they were making fast the vessel and letting down the gang plank ; then she was clasped in her father's arms.

As soon as possible they were through with the custom house officers, and, taking a carriage, they all drove to a hotel to rest one night before continuing their journey. There was much to tell on the part of both father and daughter ; so much, that it seemed as though they could only just make a beginning that day.

The next morning they took the train, the Chapmans accompanying them to the station. The parting with Herbert, to one who knew nothing of the circumstances, was nothing but commonplace, but to the two who knew all, it was exceedingly painful. Mrs. Chapman and Louise kissed Agnes and bade her good-bye ; but Herbert wrung her hand. There were no words uttered by either one. Soon the cars were in motion, and the parting that Agnes had so much dreaded was over.

It was not until they were home that Agnes told her father what had transpired. He had noticed her sad expression, and asked the cause, but she only said :

“When we are home I will tell you all, papa.”

So, as they sat in the library that evening, she unfolded her heart to him, and kept nothing back.

“Papa,” she asked, while her eyes filled with tears, “do you think I was *very* much to blame?”

“My child, I do not. Perhaps you should have seen sooner than you did; but you are very young and inexperienced, and could not be expected to know what some one older might have known. Did your cousin never in any way express his feelings toward you until he told you in so many words?”

“Not so that I understood at all. He often said he thought a great deal of me; but I did of him, and so thought it was nothing more than a cousinly regard. I cannot tell you how sorry I am; but I could never marry him.”

“I am very glad. I do not think he is the one for you. He has many good qualities, I should judge; but I think he has a changeable, roving disposition, and I do *not* think he is one calculated to make my daughter happy through life.”

“I know he is not content long in a place. Do you think he will get over feeling badly soon?”

“I think he will find in time that life is worth living,

after all. I do not doubt his love for you at the present; but I do *not* believe he is so broken-hearted as he thinks."

There was not much more said; and Agnes soon rose, and kissing her father, went to her room. She wondered why she had been allowed to cause so much pain and unhappiness to another, and how it would all end. She almost wished she knew what would be the outcome of it all. Was this really one of the "all things"? Was it going to work for her good and Herbert's? Herbert was his child now; so there must be some lesson in it for both of them. So she would trust the Lord to lead her step by step, and not be unhappy because she could not see the end from the beginning.

So the days passed with no new developments. She had no direct word from Herbert, although in an occasional letter from Louise he was mentioned in expressions that caused Agnes to think that her cousin was trying to lead her to betray herself in some way. She would write that "Herbert was more glum than when he was in Bermuda," or, "Herbert was not one-half as attentive to his sister as he used to be to his Cousin Agnes;" but in her letters of reply Agnes seldom mentioned his name.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AGNES AND HER SCHOLARS.

THE summer and fall passed quickly away. The late days of fall had arrived. The air was crisp and cool, and the foliage gorgeous in colorings. It was just at this time that a revival began in the church of which the Rices were members. It was in the midst of this that Agnes's heart went out with a great yearning to the scholars in her Sunday-school class. She longed and wept and prayed for their conversion. She went from her knees to the class, and from the class back to her knees. But none of them seemed to be particularly impressed. They laughed, and whispered during the lesson; and even when she was trying earnestly to impress them with some solemn truth, they would suddenly begin to talk on a subject entirely foreign to the one she was trying to set forth. This continued for several weeks; when Agnes decided that she would try talking with them personally. In one of the girls she felt a special interest. She would begin with her. Accordingly, the next Sunday she detained her after school was dismissed.

"Ella," she said, "I should like to see you for a short time. Can you wait a moment?"

“Yes, ma’am.”

She took the child into her arms and began:

“Ella, do you love the Lord Jesus?”

The child cast her eyes down, but made no reply.

“Do you not love the dear Saviour who loved you so much that he left his home in glory, and came down to earth to die for you?”

A moment’s pause; then a faint “I don’t know.”

“Do you want, by-and-by, when you are through with all on earth, to go to a happy home in heaven?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Do you know what you must do, in order to have one of those mansions prepared for you?”

Another brief pause; then the same answer.

“What is it?”

“Be a Christian.”

“What do you think it means to be a Christian?”

“To be good, and serve Christ.”

“Wouldn’t you like to be one?”

“I don’t know—yes, ma’am.”

“You would like to be a Christian. But are you ready to be really in earnest about it? Are you ready to say: ‘I will have Christ, if I have nothing else’? Are you ready to decide for him now?”

The child glanced uneasily at her companions who were waiting for her, and still said nothing.

“Will you not decide the question to-day, Ella?”

“I don't think I can.”

“Why not?”

“I don't know,” she said, with an annoyed laugh.

Agnes did not detain her longer, as her companions were waiting for her, and she herself was growing momentarily impatient. She dismissed her, merely saying:

“I am very sorry you are not ready to decide for Christ now, Ella; for you do not know how long the door of mercy may remain open to you. I want you to remember that I am praying for you.”

The little girl made her escape, and Agnes went home with a heavy heart. She had felt interested in her class, and especially in this particular member; she had prayed much, and spoken to the best of her ability, with apparently no good result; indeed, she feared she might have done more *harm* than good. Why was it? Others seemed to have success when they tried to work for the Lord. There was Miss Sherman, who had a class next to hers. Two of her girls had recently been converted and joined the church. And there was a class of boys just across the aisle—three of them had accepted Christ as their Saviour. Why were her girls so indifferent? Did she have no talent for teaching? She loved the work, and she loved her class; but might it not be that she had mistaken her calling? None of her class had been converted, nor could she see that they were at all interested; and she had taught them for a year. Had that

whole year's work been thrown away? She fell on her knees and prayed that the Lord would show her his will in the matter. She could not bear the thought of giving up her class, she loved them so dearly; yet if she had no gift for teaching, she did not wish to continue in it. So she prayed, first for herself, and then for her class. She rose from her knees somewhat reassured. She would look at her Bible. She did not know what to read; but she opened it, and a verse that she had marked in pencil at some previous time attracted her attention. It was in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

So here was her answer. It was for her to simply sow the seed, and leave the harvest with the Lord. She must "sow beside all waters"; for she knew not which would prosper. It would certainly be pleasant to see some fruits of her labors; but if it was her part to do the sowing, and some one else to do the reaping, "the Lord's will be done." She prayed much in the days that followed, and went to her class with a deep yearning for the salvation of the souls intrusted to her care.

It was four weeks after Agnes had tried to talk with Ella Ripley; and the morning sermon was followed by the ordinance of baptism. The pastor administered the rite to four candidates, two of whom were young girls, members of the Sunday-school. Agnes noticed that

Ella was present at the service, and breathed a silent prayer that something might be said or done that would make an impression on her. She saw that the child was more attentive in the class than usual.

The lesson ended, and the closing hymn was sung. Most of the children had left the class. Agnes stopped a moment to pick up the books and look around to see that everything was in order, as she generally did. Glancing up, she saw that Ella had not gone, but was lingering as though undecided which way to turn. A sudden impulse seized Agnes to speak to her once more on the subject that was so near her heart. The child seemed in no hurry to-day; none of her friends appeared to be waiting; and she might not have another such opportunity for some time. So she went up to her, and, taking her by the hand, drew her down to a seat.

"Ella dear," she said, "do you know what I thought when those little girls were following their Saviour in baptism this morning?"

There was no answer; but Ella turned her face a little from her teacher.

"I wondered," continued Agnes, "how long it would be before some of my girls would be ready to take that same step. I wondered how long they were going to wait before accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. How is it with you, Ella?"

With a stifled sob the little girl turned toward her.

“Oh, Miss Rice,” she said, “I would give anything if I could!”

For a moment Agnes felt as if her heart stood still. She had not really expected this. She had prayed for it, but had not the faith to fully believe that her prayers were to be answered so soon and so directly. How often our faith falls short of what the Lord is willing to do!

“Oh, Ella,” Agnes said, “I cannot tell you how glad I am! Do you really wish you were a Christian?”

“Yes, ma'am. I wish I was.”

“My child, then what hinders you?”

“I don't know.” It was the same answer she had given her teacher once before, but in reality how different. There was no indifference about it this time.

“Are you thoroughly in earnest? Do you desire to be a Christian above everything else?”

“Yes, Miss Rice.”

“Then do you know what he requires of you?”

Silence once more.

“Do you know the Bible says, ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

“Then can you doubt that if you comply with the conditions he will fulfill his promise?”

“No; but——”

“Well, what is the doubt about?”

"I can't feel right, Miss Rice."

"In what respect?"

"I can't feel as I think a Christian ought to feel. I do not feel that I am forgiven."

"So you think that if you could feel differently you would be all right; is that it?"

"Yes, ma'am; I suppose it is."

"Is that what the Lord Jesus says we must do? Does he say when you *feel* differently you shall be saved; or does he say, '*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*'?"

"He says 'believe,' Miss Rice."

"Then can you not do it? Can you doubt that, if you go to him and tell him all your heart, just how sorry you are for the wrong you have done and ask him to forgive you, that he will do it?"

Once more the child seemed to have no answer.

"Do you believe the Lord always tells the truth, Ella?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am."

"Then do you believe when he says he will forgive those who ask him and save those who believe on him that he will do it?"

"Yes, ma'am," in a subdued voice.

"Have you asked him?"

The child nodded.

"Then has he done it?"

“I hope so,” after a pause.

“We can know so, Ella.”

Just what to say further Agnes did not know. She merely asked:

“Will you not take him at his word?”

“I will try,” was the answer.

Nearly every one had left the chapel by this time, so kissing the little girl, she bade her “good-bye,” saying, as she did so, “I shall pray for you, Ella.”

How different everything seemed to Agnes from what it had a short time before when she entered the house of prayer! Her heart was so light that she felt as if all nature were different, for God was answering her prayers, and one of her dear scholars was interested in her soul's eternal welfare. She longed for the next Lord's Day to come, and almost feared that, after all, it might be only a passing fancy with the child and not a deep, heart conviction. She eagerly scanned her face the next Sunday, to see if she could read any change there, and embraced the first opportunity after the school was dismissed to question her.

“How is it, Ella?” she asked; “is the question settled yet?”

“I have settled that I want and mean to be a Christian, Miss Rice, but I have not received the assurance yet.”

“Do you mean to keep on trusting the Lord and

trying to serve him whether you ever feel any differently or not?"

"Yes, Miss Rice; I think I do."

"Then you will be all right, for the Lord never will fail to do all that he has promised."

There was no more said then, but Agnes felt confident that if the child were really as much in earnest as she had expressed herself to be, she would certainly find the light.

It was the middle of the week, when Agnes was summoned down to the parlor to see Ella.

"Miss Rice," she exclaimed, jumping up to greet her teacher, "I wanted to come and see you and to let you know that it is all right, and I see it now."

"How was it, my child?" asked her teacher, folding her in her arms. "Tell me all about it."

"Well, you know I told you how much I wanted to be a Christian. I felt that Sunday of the baptism as though I would give anything if I were only a Christian, and I thought, in order to be one, I had got to feel in some particular way. I supposed I was going to be converted in just the same way that I had heard others say they were, so I was afraid I did not feel right. You see I did not believe that the Lord had forgiven my sins, because I did not feel real happy."

"And how did you come to see your mistake?"

"I was reading in my Bible one day and thinking and

praying. I had read for some time, and I could not anywhere find that the Bible said how we must feel, but I found that verse you spoke to me of, that one you know that says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' and I thought 'Now I do believe on him, and if I do what the Bible says, I shall be saved.' I knew I had asked him to forgive me and make me his child, and somehow, all at once, I can't just tell how it was, but I saw that I had done what he said, and that therefore he would certainly save me."

Tears were in Agnes' eyes as the child finished. She clasped her closer, and imprinted a fervent kiss on the innocent childish face.

"And now," said Ella, "I want to be baptized."

"Why do you wish that, Ella?"

"Because Jesus tells us to be baptized if we believe on him."

Agnes could not doubt either the child's sincerity or her understanding. She merely said, however, "I am very glad."

It was the second Sunday after this that Agnes had the unspeakable pleasure of seeing one of her scholars confess Christ before the world. It was, indeed, a joyous occasion to her, and as she walked home after the service, the words that kept repeating themselves in her mind were: "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

CHAPTER XIX.

SURPRISES FOR AGNES.

SURPRISES seldom come singly. For awhile life was quiet and uneventful to Agnes. The first surprise that came to her was in the form of a letter from her Cousin Louise, which ran thus :

“DEAR AGNES: I fear I have been very negligent in my correspondence with you, but as I now have something to say, I determined to write and say it. I will begin at the beginning and tell you all. I do not think you were ever acquainted with Miss Van Alsten’s brother, were you? Well, I had a pressing invitation from Florence some time ago to make her a visit, which invitation I accordingly accepted, only returning home last week. I had a perfectly splendid time, and to make a long story short, when I came home I wore a diamond ring on my left hand, which of course meant that I was engaged to Eugene Van Alsten.

“I wish you could see my ring, Agnes. It is a solitaire, and very handsome. I do not know what it cost, but it is larger and handsomer than the one Florence’s father gave her, and that cost a hundred dollars.

“Herbert is dreadfully mad. He just about raved when he heard about it, and declared that he would never own that scamp for a brother, and he most certainly would not own Florence as a sister; but then, fortunately, he does not rule me. Mother is pleased enough about it.

“Eugene is very fine looking. He has gray eyes and lovely

brown, curly hair; besides, he is a perfect gentleman. Some folks are mean enough to say horrid things about him, though I have heard it insinuated that he drank too freely of champagne, and some one even said that he was carried home drunk from a party not long ago, but I think they just said it out of spite. Anyway, I don't know as I care very much so long as he is so perfectly charming. A good many young men in society occasionally take a little too much wine when they are in company.

"Mother has always wanted me to marry a man who had money, so I suppose she will have her wish.

"I expect to go to New York next month on a shopping expedition, for you see if I am to go into a family like the Van Alstens, I shall want an elaborate trousseau. I do not expect to be married before next fall, however, but Eugene says he will not wait longer than October. So I presume when the leaves turn, I shall change my name to Louise Van Alsten. Will it not seem queer? It makes me laugh to write it.

"Now do reply soon and congratulate me, for I am delighted myself. You must excuse this mess of nonsense, for you know I never was very sensible, and I expect I am less so than ever at the present. Hoping to hear from you soon,

"I remain your cousin,

"LOUISE CHAPMAN."

Agnes finished reading the letter, and then sat quite still for some time. She gazed out of the window and let the letter lay in her lap. She had always known that Louise was gay and thoughtless, but that she had gone to such an extent as her letter would indicate, Agnes felt almost unwilling to believe. She realized that her cousin had allowed worldly ambition to conquer her judgment, for she knew by her letter that she felt no real, true love

for the young man to whom she had engaged herself, only a certain pride that she had captivated one who was handsome, polished, and wealthy.

What should she say to her? She pondered and prayed over the matter, and then wrote to her cousin. She felt it was not just the kind of a letter Louise would enjoy, yet she wrote nothing unkind. She said all her conscience would allow. It was a wish expressed for her *true* happiness, and a hope that she had done what was for the best, with a slight caution, as she was to take a very important step.

The next surprise that came to Agnes was entirely different in its character. She was summoned to the parlor one afternoon to see a caller. She entered the room and stood still for a moment, then advanced and held out her hand to greet Mr. Leighton.

"Miss Rice," he said, as he seated himself after the greeting, "pardon me for taking you thus unawares, but I came to the city yesterday on business and took this liberty."

"I am pleased to see you," remarked Agnes, simply.

"And how have you been since your return from Bermuda?" inquired the gentleman.

"Very well, thank you," she replied, and added, "You left Bermuda somewhat hurriedly, did you not?"

"Somewhat at the last, although I had intended returning at about that time."

There was silence for a few moments. Both seemed a trifle embarrassed. Then Mr. Leighton broke the silence by inquiring after the friends she was with while in Bermuda.

"I received a letter from my Cousin Louise a few days ago," she said, "in which she told me of her recent engagement to Mr. Eugene Van Alsten."

"Eugene Van Alsten? I am sorry to hear that," he remarked, as his brow darkened. "I fear your cousin is not aware of this young man's character?"

"Louise seemed to admit that he drank quite freely; but it makes little difference to her, Mr. Leighton, so long as he is polished and has money."

Mr. Leighton looked grave and said he was exceedingly sorry to hear it; then he inquired after Herbert. Agnes said she had not heard from him directly, but she believed he was well. A look of surprise came across her companion's face.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I thought you were inseparable friends last spring."

"We were."

"Yet you say you have not heard from him. But I fear I am intrusive. I would like, though, to know how the young man is advancing spiritually, if you are able to inform me."

"I trust he is all right from what I have heard of him through his sister's letters."

The gentleman looked perplexed. There was an embarrassing silence: then he spoke:

“Miss Rice, I am going to ask you a very plain question, and I trust you will forgive me if it is too plain, and use your own judgment as to answering it.” He stopped a moment, as though at a loss how to proceed, then went on: “I thought when we were in Bermuda that you and Mr. Chapman were engaged. Was I mistaken?”

Agnes' cheeks crimsoned, she hesitated a moment, then said:

“You were mistaken, Mr. Leighton; we were not engaged at that time, neither have we been at any other.”

“Then I labored under a false impression; perhaps I formed too hasty a judgment,” said he, leaning back in his chair; “pardon my freeness, Miss Rice.”

Then the conversation drifted into other topics. Mr. Leighton inquired of Agnes how she was getting along spiritually, and she told him about her Sunday-school class, and asked him to pray for the members. At length he rose to go, saying as he did:

“I expect to leave the city to-morrow, but I shall probably return in a week or so on business that may detain me here some little time. May I have the pleasure of calling to see you then?”

Agnes assented, and he took his departure.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OUTCOME.

MR. LEIGHTON left the city the next day. But, true to his word, he returned in a short time, and his stay this time seemed to be quite indefinite. Indeed, he appeared in no particular hurry that it should be otherwise. He was a frequent visitor at Mr. Rice's house, and Agnes saw much of him for the next three or four weeks. He came one evening at the end of this time, and wanted to know if Miss Rice would like to take a walk. She was obliged to decline the invitation, however, owing to the fact that her father and other inmates of the house had gone out; and as Mr. Rice somewhat expected a gentleman to call that evening for some papers that had been promised him, he had specially requested Agnes to remain at home. So Mr. Leighton seated himself with her in the library. There was nothing of importance said by either one, until the gentleman broke the silence by saying that he expected to return to his home the next morning. On this, Agnes looked up from her crochet work with an expression that showed some surprise. He evidently perceived it; for he said:

“It was somewhat unexpected to me. But I received

a letter to-day that showed me I was needed at home; and as I have nearly finished transacting the business I had to do here, I feel that I must return at once."

Silence again, during which Agnes crocheted vigorously. At length he said:

"You do not even say you are sorry to have me go, Miss Agnes."

"I beg your pardon. I am very sorry. I shall miss you, most certainly."

"I hope you will."

It seemed to Agnes rather a queer expression, and she dropped her work in her lap and looked at him. He smiled and said:

"It is pleasant to be missed. Do you not think so?"

"Pleasanter to *be* missed, than to *miss*."

"Do you not think I shall participate in the latter feeling also?"

Her cheeks flushed slightly, and she replied:

"I do not know."

He rose, and, going over to where she sat, took her work from her, and seating himself by her side took both her hands in his, saying as he did so:

"I want you to look me right in the eyes, and then tell me, if you can, that you do not know."

She looked up, but it was only for a moment. Then her eyes fell, and she laughingly questioned:

"How should I know?"

“You may know it because I tell you so.”

Agnes began to feel a trifle uneasy, and would have drawn her hands away from the clasp they were in; but he held them fast. It seemed to her they had sat thus for an exceedingly long time, neither speaking; but in reality it was a very few minutes, as the clock on the mantel plainly showed. Then Mr. Leighton broke the silence.

“Agnes, I have something that I must say to you before I leave you. It has been on my mind for a long time, and I cannot go away without telling you. I think, however, you must know what my feelings are toward you, do you not?”

Did he expect an answer? If so, he was certainly disappointed; for she felt, as she afterward described it, as though her lips were sealed. He waited a moment, and then continued:

“It is nothing new—this affection that I feel for you. In fact, I think I have loved you almost from the first time I saw you. I am sure I have from the second. And now, my dear, is it too much for me to hope that my love is returned, in a measure, at least?”

Again he was answered by silence. She felt utterly unable to utter a syllable, until he took her into his arms and, for the first time, pressed a kiss on brow and cheek and lips. Then her pent-up feelings found vent in tears. They came in a perfect torrent, and for a while he let

them have their way without trying to check them; but at length, when he thought this had lasted long enough, he asked:

“What have you to say to me, darling?”

Drying her tears, she looked up with a smile, and at the same time with a shyness that was bewitching, and said:

“I think you know without my saying anything.”

The kisses were showered on her this time. Hands and cheeks and lips all came in for their share. Then, placing her on the sofa and taking a seat beside her, he told her the whole story.

“I admired you the first time I saw you, Agnes. Whether it was genuine *love* or not, I am not fully prepared to say. But I have no doubt about it that day I met you on Victoria Park, in Bermuda. That meeting inspired me with new hopes. It was a complete surprise, as you know, but none the less pleasant for that. Then you remember I called to see you, and then there was the drive to Prospect; and if the first part of that drive was half as pleasant to you as it was to me, you were satisfied. But before I helped you to alight at your boarding place, a vague feeling of dread had taken possession of me. You spoke to me of the interest you had in your cousin's spiritual welfare; and somehow, the words you spoke, and the *way* in which they were uttered, led me to believe that there was a closer relationship between

you two than that of third cousins. I went back to my hotel, and the idea haunted me, while circumstances that I had thought nothing of before, now rose up before me with startling clearness; and though they were trivial in themselves, they seemed to me at that time to carry great weight with them. I remembered the cool way in which Mr. Chapman spoke to me the day you introduced me to him in the Park, and the evident haste that he seemed to be in to have you accompany him elsewhere. I thought little of it at the time, knowing that he was your cousin; but it all came back to me then with startling clearness. I saw, or thought I saw, that I had been making a great mistake. I decided then that I would intrude no more; but would do by him what I would wish any one to do by me under similar circumstances. The rest of my stay in Bermuda was anything but pleasant. I had intended staying a week or two longer, but I felt I could not. And so, with a parting call on you, I returned to my home, carrying with me a heavier heart than I had known before for years."

He paused, and Agnes said:

"I thought at the time it was very strange that you should leave so hurriedly, and make so little effort to see me during the latter part of your stay. I tried to think if I had done anything to offend you."

"Oh, Agnes!" he said, "if you only knew what that last brief interview with you, the day before I sailed,

cost me, you would have been very lenient in your judgment toward me. But to continue my story. When I came to this city, some weeks ago, I felt that I must call on you. That you were engaged to Mr. Chapman, I did not doubt; but somehow I felt impressed to come. I knew there would be no impropriety in a friendly call, whatever your relations were toward him; and so I came. Then when I found that what I had supposed to be an insurmountable barrier between us was in reality nothing, my hopes revived again. You know the rest, Agnes; and to-night I believe I am the happiest man in the city."

He ceased speaking, and for a while they sat in silence. But the firm pressure of the hand spoke more deeply than words could have done. Finally Agnes asked:

"Shall you leave early to-morrow morning, Mr. Leighton?"

"Do you know my first name?" he questioned.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then call me by it, please."

"Do you leave early in the morning, Robert?"

"Quite early. I must see your father to-night. What time do you expect him home?"

"Before long, now."

"Then, with your permission, I will wait for him."

So the minutes passed until shortly after the clock struck ten. Agnes heard her father's key in the night

latch, and his familiar step in the hall. Then she exclaimed :

“There is papa!” She would have freed herself from Mr. Leighton’s embrace, but he held her closely, saying :

“No, Agnes; he must know. And it is all right.”

So when Mr. Rice entered the room, he found his daughter, with downcast eyes and very red cheeks, standing there, with Mr. Leighton’s arm encircling her.

The conversation that followed need not be put into print. Sufficient to say it was essentially the same as hundreds of others have been. When Mr. Rice left them, there was a suspicious look about his eyes, and his parting words were: “May God give you both his richest blessing.”

Before leaving, Robert Leighton and Agnes Rice knelt together, while the former poured out a prayer of thanksgiving to their Father in heaven for his great blessings to them.

“I shall try and call round a few moments in the morning, before leaving the city,” he said, as he bade her good-night.

Then she slowly mounted the stairs that led to her room. It was a bright moonlight night; and drawing an easy chair to the window she sat down, and resting her head in her hand, gazed on the landscape below. How beautiful everything seemed, with the moon shed-

ding her silvery light over all! It seemed to bring her nearer to the Creator of all, as she gazed and thought how great he was, and at the same time how kind and good. How much he had always permitted her to enjoy, unworthy though she was; and now a new, deep joy had come into her life. She bowed her head and thanked him from the depths of her heart; while over and over again the thought would come to her:

“He has given me so much, and I deserved so little.” And as she looked back over her past experience, although it had not always been what she could have desired at the time, still she could see her Father’s hand in it, and knew that he had been leading her.

She had just finished her breakfast the next morning, when the servant announced Mr. Leighton.

“I can stop but a moment,” he said. “But I came to bring this to you before I left.” And so saying, he slipped a ring on her finger.

“Oh, Robert, how kind of you! And you were in such haste this morning too.”

“Not in so great haste but that I could see to so important a matter, Agnes. And now, my darling, I must leave you. It is hard to say good-bye; but I am looking forward to the time when we shall not have to be so separated; but will be united ‘till death do us part.’”

He held her a moment in a strong embrace; then hurried away.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN OPEN LETTER.

AGNES was sitting on the veranda one afternoon, when the postman came up the walk and threw two letters into her lap. She took them up, and turning them over, saw that they were both addressed to her. Glancing at the postmark, she discovered it to be the same on both. The writing on one she recognized as that of her cousin Louise.

Opening this envelope first, she found that it was an invitation to Louise's wedding. Dainty in the highest degree, with both engraving and stationary faultless. Nevertheless, Agnes laid it down with a sigh. She was truly sorry for Louise, for she felt that worldly ambition was the ruling motive in her life.

Then she turned her attention to the second envelope. Although it was postmarked from the same place, the writing was not the same. Breaking it open, and glancing at the signature, she found that it was from Herbert. What could it mean? He had never written to her before. She had a vague sense of dread lest something was the matter. The letter ran as follows:

"DEAR AGNES: I presume by this time you have received an invitation to my sister's wedding. I do not wish you to

think, however, that it is anything I endorse. I am perfectly ashamed of Louise. I never thought she was particularly blessed with common sense; and now I know she is not. You have no idea what that Eugene Van Alsten is, or you would not blame me for feeling so. He is handsome and polite (when he has a mind to be) and wealthy; but when you have said that you have said everything that it is possible in his favor. He is a silly, brainless, dissipated fellow. You may think that rather strong language for me to use in regard to my prospective brother; but I will never own him as a brother of mine, and I told Louise I would not. He may be my sister's husband, but he *is not my brother*.

“ Louise has done nothing but talk about the affair ever since they were engaged. She and mother went to New York, shopping, and brought home material enough to stock a small store.

“ Van Alsten pretends he is going to do great things; but to tell you the truth, he has not brains enough to make a living. His father always has supported him, and I presume always will.

“ Louise knows that he drinks wines very freely; but it does not seem to trouble her. She would be terribly provoked if she mistrusted I had written a word to you about it, so perhaps you had better not let her know; but I can't help it. I wanted you to know how it was, and also to know it was nothing that I could approve.

“ Now I have something different to tell you; something about myself. You know I never was contented in one place long at a time, but from a child I always liked to wander round. I always thought I should enjoy going into the navy. I do not remember whether I ever told you so, or not; but at last, I have a first-rate chance. I presume it will surprise you, but I am perfectly delighted myself. Mother does not like the idea very well, and Louise is as mad as she can take time from her preparations to be; but then I am not accountable to my sister, I am happy to say, especially as she is not trimming her sails to suit me.

“ The chance I have is one of a thousand. Mother cannot

deny that it is a good one, and finally has given her consent. I shall probably go to Africa and China, and I don't know where, before I get through.

“ Louise told me of your engagement, Agnes; and I want to congratulate you. I hope you will be very happy, and I think you will; for I feel confident that you have made a wise choice. I believe Mr. Leighton will make you a good husband—far better than I ever could have been. I loved you; but I can see now that you were wiser than I in your judgment. I do not think we were just suited to each other. In fact, I was not steady or sedate, or whatever you are a mind to call it, enough for you. I should have taken a freak that I wanted to go to Egypt, or Japan, or the North Polar Sea, just as likely as not, and you see that would never have done for you; so I see that it is all for the best as it is. I would not change it.

“ But I would not have you think from what I have written that I have lost any of my respect for you, or that I love any one else. I respect you more than any one I know, or ever have known. As for loving any one else, I do not think I shall *ever* do that. I have loved once, and I think it will be *only* once. We cannot find our ideal many times, while passing through this world; but I see now that it is all right as it is.

“ I wanted to write this, so that you might feel perfectly free and happy, and not be thinking every once in a while that you were causing me unhappiness.

“ I am very much engrossed with the thought of entering the navy. It was one of my boyhood's dreams, and I hope I may not be disappointed in the results.

“ I want you to pray for me; for I feel that I need your prayers. I try to act like a Christian, and lead a Christian life in all respects; but it is hard sometimes, and I feel that I fall very far short. I do not feel just the interest that I wish I did; but I want to do my duty.

“ And now, Agnes, our paths through life will, in all probability, lie very far apart. Yours, most likely, in America, in a happy home; while I, a cosmopolite, wander in some distant

clime, under a tropical sun, or in frozen seas. We may never meet again on earth; but go where I will, the memory of those pleasant days we spent together in the fairy isles of Bermuda will be with me. The words you spoke to me then will not be forgotten. I may not fully live up to them, but I shall remember them; and I hope that in the great hereafter, we shall meet in a still fairer land.

“May heaven’s richest blessing be yours, my dear *cousin*. I can say that now, although once I could not bear to even think of you in any relationship save one. But it is thus I now sign myself,

“Your affectionate cousin,

“HERBERT CHAPMAN.”

There were tears in Agnes’ eyes before she finished reading this letter. She loved her cousin as she ever had done. Was he truly happy? She hardly knew; but she felt that he was not really unhappy; and she felt glad of that. She was also filled with thanksgiving that she had never done as he had so earnestly asked her to do at one time. She knew that even then his disposition had been a roving one, and now she realized more than ever that they would not have been happy together.

Then she sat down and wrote him a letter—the first one she had ever written—and poured out her heart in an earnest entreaty that wherever he went, whatever he did, he would keep close to his gracious Master.

CHAPTER XXII.

AGNES AND LOUISE IN CONTRAST.

THE weeks and months rolled by, and the Month of Roses had again come, with all its beauty and fragrance. The time for Agnes' wedding had arrived. It was a perfect June evening. The day had been warm, but not sultry, and the evening air was cool and sweet.

The church was brilliantly lighted, and the air laden with the perfume of the roses that had been placed in profusion on and around the pulpit. They were the only flowers used for decoration, as Agnes had wished it to be so.

The guests with smiling faces were assembling, while the organ pealed forth its notes of welcome. There was a pause, and then suddenly the organ sounded forth the first notes of the Wedding March, as the bridal party entered the church. Slowly they passed up the aisle, until they stood before the minister.

Very lovely the fair young girl looked in her immaculate robes of snowy whiteness; her hair arranged in soft waves, over which fell the bridal veil, fastened with a spray of orange blossoms. Her cheeks were slightly

flushed with excitement, which increased rather than detracted from the effect.

The organ ceased playing, and the minister began—the solemn words spoken carrying with them a meaning far deeper to Agnes than ever before. Clear and distinct came the answer from each, “I do,” followed by the declaration: “I pronounce you to be husband and wife.” And Agnes Rice and Robert Leighton were now united by the holy bonds of matrimony “until death.”

Then they knelt, while a fervent prayer was offered and a blessing invoked on the union just formed. And then the bridal party left the church.

Louise had sent Agnes and Mr. Leighton a pressing invitation to stop with her for a short time, while on their wedding tour. So accordingly they spent a few days at her home. Agnes had never met Eugene Van Alsten before; and she was not remarkably prepossessed with his appearance. He was fine-looking. Indeed, she thought she had seldom met with a handsomer man. But there was something about him, nevertheless, that, added to what she already knew of him, did not cause her to look upon him with much favor.

She and Louise were alone one afternoon, occupying themselves with some light fancy work. Louise had appeared moody that day, and all attempts on the part of Agnes or any one else to draw her into conversation

had been comparatively unsuccessful. Finally she threw down her work and burst into tears.

“Why, Louise,” exclaimed Agnes, looking up in alarm, “what is the trouble?”

Louise sobbed for some time, and then suddenly dried her eyes, and bracing herself up in her chair, said:

“Oh, nothing very special. I suppose I am foolish.”

“But something is certainly the matter,” persisted Agnes. “You would never do like that if there were not.”

“Well, I presume I am childish.” Then suddenly facing her cousin, she asked: “You were not awake last night when Eugene came home, were you?”

“I don’t know; no, I think not. Why?”

“Oh, never mind. Agnes, is Mr. Leighton just as pleasant and kind to you now as he was when he first knew you?”

Agnes opened her eyes in genuine surprise.

“How can you ask me?” she said. “It seems as though he grew more kind and loving every day.”

“I thought so. Oh, Agnes Leighton, I would give anything if my husband was like yours in some respects!”

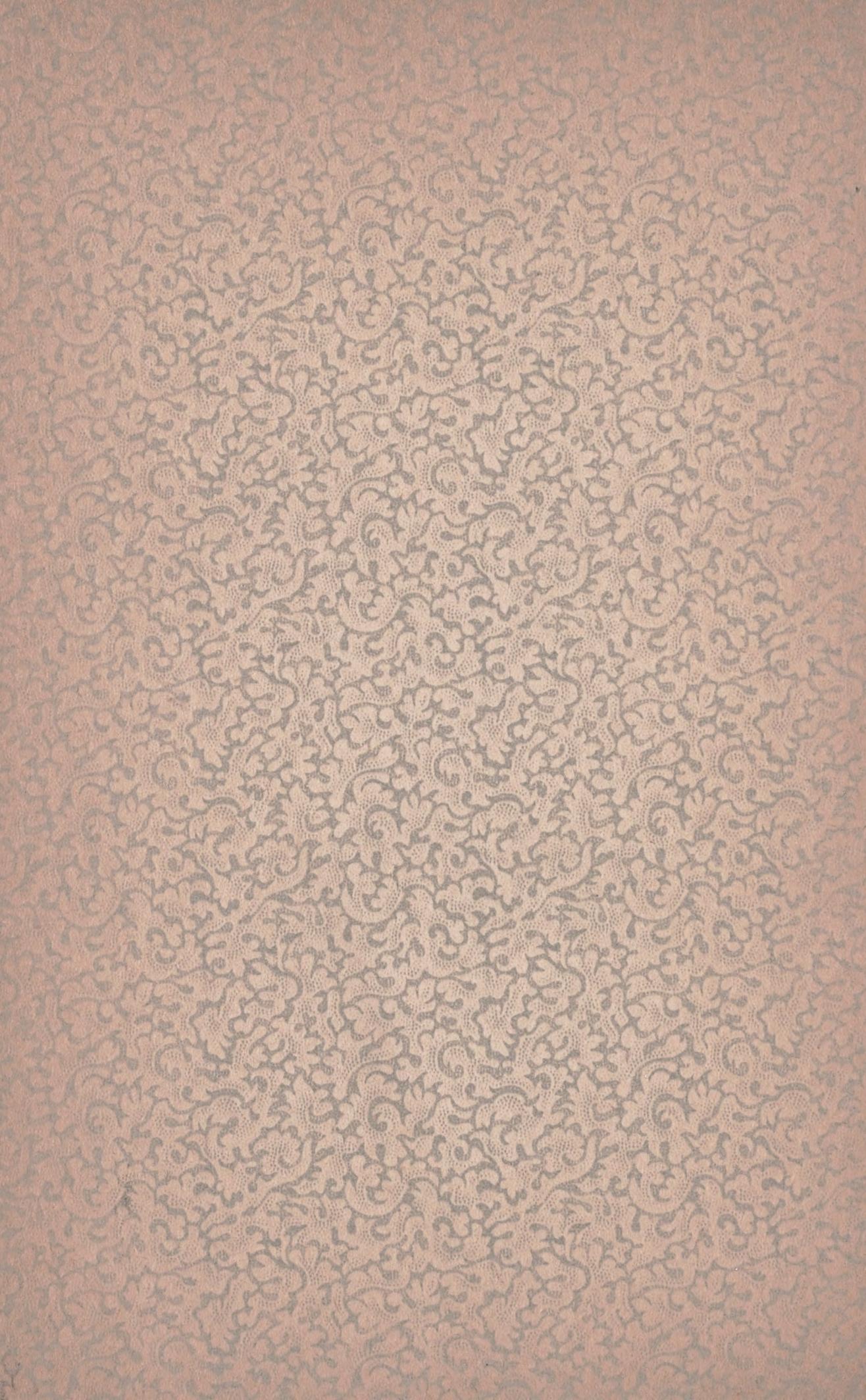
Agnes was truly sorry for her cousin, for her distress was genuine. She talked to her for some time, but could get her to say nothing more on the subject; indeed, after that, Louise exhibited a certain reserve toward Agnes,

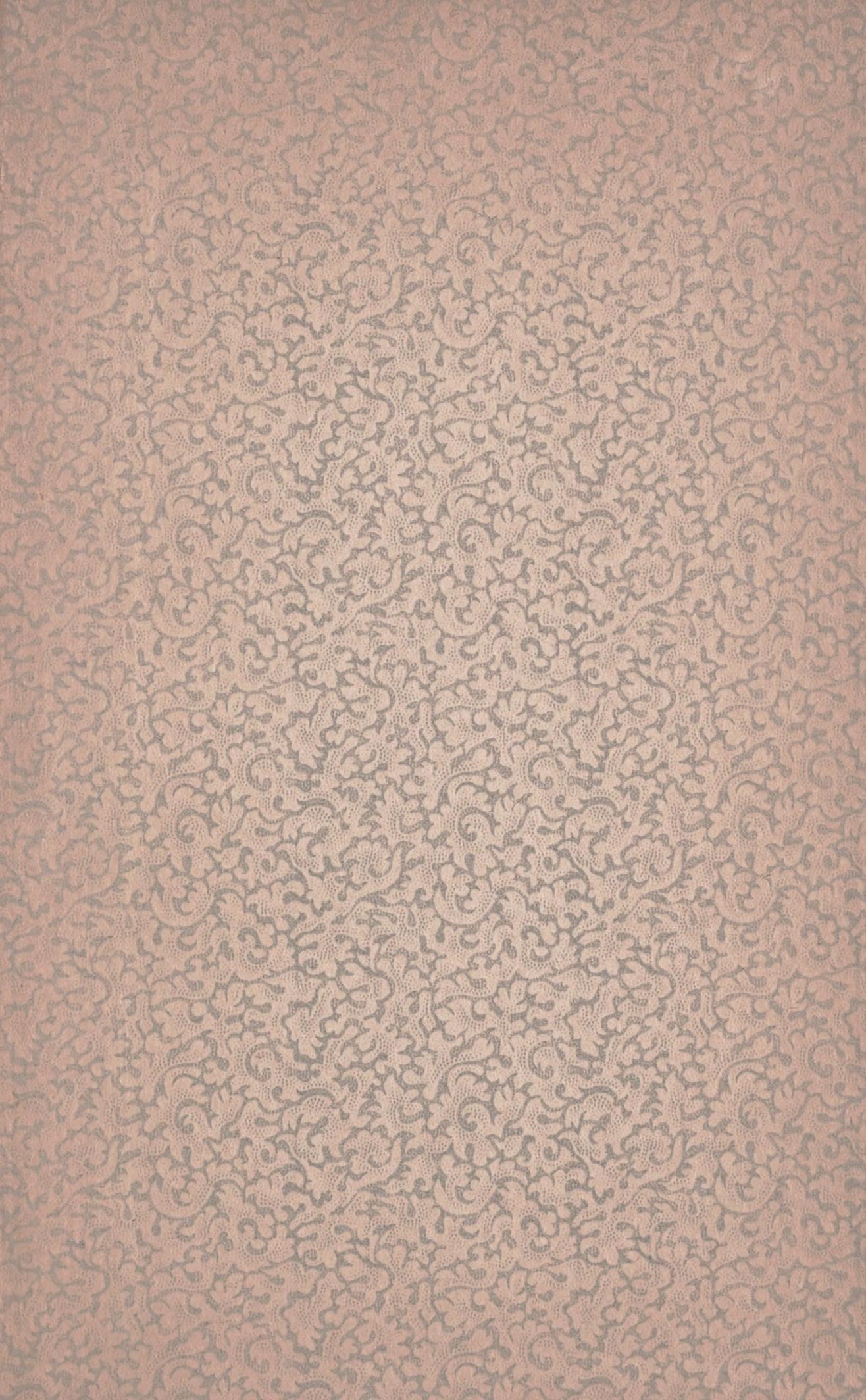
which she maintained throughout the remainder of her visit. She never alluded to the subject again, and evidently felt as though she had made a mistake in speaking at all. But Agnes pitied her just the same, for she knew that all was not well; and though Louise with a certain degree of pride would have everything seem right to the outside world, yet behind the fair exterior she carried an aching heart.

Agnes related all this to her husband when they were alone. He took her in his arms, and imprinting a fervent kiss on the upturned face, said :

“My darling wife, we have much, very much for which to thank our Heavenly Father. The way has sometimes seemed dark and rough, but his hand has smoothed the path and led us, ‘step by step,’ into a pleasant place.”

THE END.





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