

THE CALL AT EVENING

CHAPTER 1

Leesburg, 1902

The Day was dying. Over everything had settled that strange quiet which Bill Lakeman said was Nature relaxing before she went to sleep. In the little town of Leesburg there was an unusual stir. The heat of the day had kept under the shade and protection of their own homes all who were not compelled to furnish the necessities of life. The few people who found it necessary to be about moved languidly and paused often under the shade of the friendly maple trees which adorned the streets of the town. Now, as evening brought the first sign of relief, they sought recompense by strolling on the town promenade, seeking cool retreats in the city parks, or taking a cool dip in Strong Lake.

As the night deepened there was a noticeable decrease of those on the promenade. Next, the close observer would see that for some the city park had lost its charm; and finally but reluctantly, the bathers turned their steps homeward. By ten o'clock the village was quiet, having seemingly settled itself for the night.

Along the highway that led past the Silas Perkins farm there walked one with halting, stumbling steps. Not that many years of varied experiences had passed over his head, bringing to him the sour disposition of the pessimist. On the contrary, had the darkness permitted us to see his face, we would have thought for a moment that he was only a boy. A closer look would have told us we were wrong – that the stranger was somewhere near the age of thirty. In this case, however, the darkness was kindly, for it hid a face very white and worn. The step so closely resembling the shambling gait of the very aged may have been the result of extreme exhaustion, or a crippling condition. Whenever a friendly object offered, he seated himself for a few moments of rest and then, resolutely setting his face toward Leesburg, plodded on.

CHAPTER 2

A STRANGER IN THE NIGHT

Leesburg did not boast of many palatial homes. Its inhabitants were strictly cosmopolitan until Squire Parsons built his residence on State Street (whereupon the name of the street was changed to Wolgast Avenue), hired a retinue of servants, had himself elected to the state legislature, and promptly became the Honorable J.A. Parsons, Esquire. After that, a few of the most daring changed their abode of fifty years for a more modern but infinitely less comfortable dwelling; but none dared surpass the Honorable Gentleman, or even copy the architecture of the Parsons Mansion. "Twas enough to be able to point to it with pride and say, "Here lives our most important citizen." Most of the good townfolk had come to feel that they were part owners of the Parsons residence with the Honorable J.A. thrown in. This sense of ownership could be discerned easily at each publication of the Leesburg weekly paper, "Our respected citizen, the Honorable J.A. Parsons," or "Our esteemed patron" (In just what manner he had been the town's patron being quite indefinite), and "Our much beloved citizen," being pressed into service for the Honorable and him alone. These had become quite sacred to him. As yet no Lucifer had appeared on the scene to question or aspire to his glory.

Among those who ventured to follow at a respectful distance was Marion Burnside, who, having no thought of ever equaling, was quite content with holding second place. The fact that Marion Burnside was also a deacon in the church which the Honorable one favored with his presence at each Sunday service, was enough in itself to entitle him to that place. Who else could think of occupying there? Others must be content to allow their individuality to be swallowed up in the mass of Leesburg citizens.

On the night of which we write, Marion Burnside sat in his uncomfortable but very modern dwelling long after the hour when the houses of the good were closed and quiet. Not that Marion Burnside did not consider himself among the good; but having the distinction, as we have already mentioned, of being the second citizen, he did not feel that it was absolutely necessary for him to adhere to the tried and invincible rules which governed the good of Leesburg.

So it happened that from beneath the drawn curtains of this somewhat magnificent residence streamed the

telltale rays of light which guided the steps of the wanderer slowly and painfully to the door, in the hope that there he might find some of that mercy and love for humanity which at the time he felt to be such a dire necessity.

He leaned weakly against a friendly pillar which was one of the many supports of the massive porch that protected the front entrance while he waited for an answer to his timid ring. Perhaps it was the very timidity of the ring that was his undoing, or perhaps it was the lateness of the hour, for late evening visitors were unusual in Leesburg, and none but the first and second citizens of Leesburg could, with immunity, partake of the unusual. Be that as it may, Marion Burnside was in no pleasant mood when he slowly and deliberately opened the door upon his belated visitor. The only thing at that moment which lightened the oppressiveness of the atmosphere, was the kindly, delicate face of a young girl who had just entered the room and stood expectantly beside Marion Burnside. Looking at the two as they stood there, one hardly could credit the statement that here were father and daughter. The stranger entered, if half falling, half walking could be called an entrance. For a moment the two watched him in silence.

“Well, sir!” The tone was not kindly. It was Marion Burnside speaking. “What can I do for you?”

The young man met his gaze frankly. It cost him an effort to keep the pain he was enduring from showing in his face.

“I am a wanderer at present, “ he said. “I have been so unfortunate as to sustain an injury to my foot. I do not think it serious, however, but am afraid I will be unable to walk the remaining distance into town. I came to ask if you would allow me to remain here during the night. I feel quite sure I will be able to resume my journey tomorrow.”

The request came falteringly; evidently he was not accustomed to begging. The heart of Marion Burnside had not been softened.

“Young man,” he said, “we are not in the habit of taking strangers into our home. We would not consider such a procedure advisable. A man of your age who finds it necessary to walk the road has little to recommend him.”

“I can give you very good references, sir. I am a minister of the gospel and, if you would like, can show you my ordination certificate and my credentials.”

Had he known it, this was a very poorly chosen remark.

Marion Burnside had no patience with ministers who could not command a salary large enough to make it unnecessary for them ever to “walk the road.”

“What church do you represent, may I ask?” The tone was quiet but threatening.

“Certainly, sir,” the stranger answered; “I represent the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”

The effect of the words was instantaneous. The face of Marion Burnside became livid; he executed one magnificent imperious gesture, which showed the stranger the door and at the same time banished him from the universe. There was only one thing to do. The face of the young man became one shade whiter than it had been before. With what grace he could manage, with one disabled foot, he reached the door and found himself once more a part of the night. It is strange at times what little things can lighten our burdens, Before the door was slammed behind him, he caught the words of the thoroughly aroused girl, and the very reproach in her tone was in some manner a balm to the wounds he had received.

“Father,” she cried, “that man was crippled!”

CHAPTER 3

“I WILL DO SOMETHING”

The REBUKE was lost on Marion Burnside. He calmly went about the closing of the house as though nothing unusual had happened. Jennie watched him with flashing eyes, and finally, as it seemed there was nothing she could do, went quietly to her own room. For this night, however, Marion Burnside had omitted the family prayer. It was the only evidence that he was inwardly disturbed. Jennie was very glad he had done so. She felt she could not have listened to one of her father’s ponderous prayers very worshipfully after what she had just witnessed. Once in the security of her own room, she knelt beside her bed and simply asked God to take care of the stranger and forgive her father. Ordinarily quiet and submissive, there still flowed in her veins the blood of the Burnsides, and tonight she found it impossible to banish from her mind the white, drawn face of the stranger, or suppress her growing indignation at the attitude of her father. What if he were not of their particular faith? Did that make him less one of God’s creatures? She could not have treated a dog so; and he with an injured foot unable to go farther. Why, the next house was beyond the park; he would never be able to make it. If she were only a man now she might- the thought

was never finished. Determination flashed in her eyes. For once she was a Burnside. The gentler disposition, which had been a gift from her mother, slipped from her as a mask.

"I will do something," she said: "I will." The thought was no sooner born than it in turn brought forth action. She turned the latch on the low window of her room and stepped out on the wide veranda and ran lightly down the steps to the barn. A low neigh from within showed that her footsteps, light as they had been, were heard and recognized.

"You've got to help, Daisy," she said as she threw the saddle lightly on the pony's back. The little animal rubbed her nose against the soft cheek of her mistress in answer. In another moment they were picking their way quietly along the driveway which connected with the highway. Fortunately the moon had just emerged from a light cloud, giving to the night a soothing, gentle quiet. For the first time in her life the beauties of a moonlight night were lost to Jennie Burnside, submerged in the tempestuous thoughts of her own mind. She scanned the highway closely and not in vain. She found the stranger sitting in a huddled heap by the roadside, staring with unseeing eyes at the unoffending moon, as though it were in some manner responsible for his troubles. He was unconscious of help so near at hand. He was also unmindful that, after all, he had found in the home of Marion Burnside that love for humanity for which he had prayed, and that in his own time and way the Lord whom he served was looking after him, and had not, as he thought, forsaken him or left him alone.

As Jennie Burnside paused a moment, looking at the white face raised to heaven, she was conscious only of an overwhelming pity. She dismounted and came quietly to his side. It was not until she had touched him lightly on the arm that he knew of her presence.

"I hardly know what to say to you," she said. "I did not think it right that you were not allowed to stay with us tonight. I have come to give what help I can. I know you are not able to walk. Can you get on the horse?"

The young man hesitated. "What are you going to do?" he asked.

She understood his question; an amused smile lighted her face. "Shall I help you mount?" was all she said. He knew it to be a command, and for the second time that night he obeyed a Burnside because there seemed to be nothing else to do.

He never knew how long he rode thus. He was only vaguely conscious that she led the way, walking herself. When he afterward realized this, his face flushed with shame, and he emphatically condemned his own weakness. He was brought to a realization of the present when she turned suddenly from the highway and entered a quiet country lane and, passing through a small grove of trees, came unexpectedly upon an old-fashioned, unpretentious cottage, half-hidden beneath an abundant growth of clinging ivy. His guide stopped and, when he had safely dismounted, pointed to the house and said simply, "Go there."

Before he could thank her she had jumped lightly into the saddle and was gone. He watched her until she was swallowed up in the shadows of the trees, and still stood listening to the clatter of the horse's hoofs until the sound was lost in the distance or had melted into the melody of the night. Then he turned wearily to the house. He could never have told how he reached the door. He only saw for a moment, as in a haze, the kindly face of Bill Lakeman as he opened the door in answer to the very feeble knock. The face, losing none of its kindness, seemed suddenly surrounded by deeper shadows and was then lost in blackness.

"Stanley!" the old man called. "I think we have work here."

Together they lifted the unconscious man and carried him into the old back parlor, where he was laid gently on a sofa.

"Looks just like a boy," he continued. "How do you suppose he ever got up here?"

"It does seem strange," his son answered, "so far from the highway. I think I had better look into this." With a steady hand and unconscious manner, which betokened medical enlightenment, he examined the young man before him.

"Exhaustion, I think," was all he said.

The quick eye of Bill Lakeman had discovered something else wrong. He touched Stanley on the shoulder and said: "Look, boy; I'm not a medical man, but I don't like the way that foot is swollen above the shoe there."

"By Jove!" Stanley exclaimed. "A bad sprain, and he has been walking on it. I hope he doesn't regain consciousness until I have finished dressing it. The pain in that foot must have been dreadful. Here, father, just hold that leg steady a moment. That's it. Now can you get me some hot water?"

The shoe was removed. Deftly the dressing was made. Stanley watched his patient closely for signs of returning consciousness, but as yet he remained blissfully ignorant of what was passing.

"What do you think?" Bill Lakeman asked as he returned

"It's a bad foot," he son answered. "He'll not walk on it again soon."

"He's probably a stranger and out of money," the father said. He watched his son curiously, to see what would be the effect of these words.

Stanley raised his head. "Well, father, we are not quite destitute, are we?" he asked. Whatever his father had hoped to hear, he was evidently not disappointed.

"Stanley, my boy," he said, "I knew the colleges never would spoil you. I knew you always would be the same warm-hearted boy."

Stanley Lakeman was very much embarrassed by his father's praise. He only dropped his head and resumed the dressing of the injured foot. His Father, seeing his embarrassment, shrewdly left the room.

Thoughts of himself were fleeting, for the stranger was showing signs of returning consciousness. Stanley worked rapidly. He had just finished the securing of the last of the bandages when the young man opened his eyes and looked into the face of the man bending over him.

"Feeling better now?" Stanley asked kindly.

The other looked as though he did not understand. Seeing the bewilderment in his eyes, Stanley smiled the more reassuringly as he held a glass of water to the stranger's lips.

"You'll be all right as soon as you have rested awhile," he said. A sudden twinge of pain from the injured foot seemed to bring to the stranger a recollection of the thing that had brought about his present predicament.

"Oh, I remember!" he said, "I could not see where I was going and hurt my foot." He raised himself slightly and looked at the offending member and then raised his eyes in astonishment to the face of the young man beside him.

"Why, who- are you a physician?"

Stanley could not keep the twinkle out of his eyes. "Just call me a country doctor," he said.

"I don't know how to thank you," the other continued. "I remember knocking at a door- was it this house? A kind-looking old gentlemen came to the door, and then I think I must have fainted."

This time Stanley turned his face away, that his companion might not see his smile.

"Yes," he said, "I think you must have." A moment later he was again a physician. "Now we will not talk any more tonight. You may tell me all you care to tomorrow. But you see it is now past midnight. I think we need the rest, don't you?"

It was impossible not to catch some of the young physician's cheerfulness. The trying, depressing experiences of the day already were slipping from him. He had a feeling that they must have happened to someone else or have been a part of a bad dream. But for an occasional sharp pain from the injured foot, which savored all too plainly of reality, he could have persuaded himself it was indeed only a dream from which he had not yet awakened.

Stanley helped him into an adjoining room, to which there seemed to cling such an atmosphere of home that the young man would have found it restful itself, even had it not had the additional advantage of an old-fashioned, high topped bedstead, with the generous, indispensable feather bed, and the coolest of linen sheets. There had been a time in his life when such things had been quite commonplace; but, tonight, if there existed on earth a greater luxury, he was unable to comprehend it.

Stanley saw with what evident satisfaction the young man sank among the feathers, and still stood beside him as he drifted with the simplicity of a child into helpful, restful slumber. When a few minutes later Stanley sought his own room, there was in his heart that peculiar joy in living which comes only to those who are always ready to extend a helping hand to people in life less fortunate than themselves, and who are ever ready to reach out and help those in need. To such alone are given to comprehend and appreciate the great common brotherhood of mankind. Bill Lakeman, coming in a moment later, saw at a glance that the work of the evening was finished, and without the preliminary of locking the house against an expected burglar, sought his own room, and with the ease and grace of the clean-minded, was quickly swallowed up in the great common oblivion, and the old house was once more in the grasp of the mystery of night.

CHAPTER 4

A PREACHER IN THE HANDS OF INFIDELS

Bill Lakeman was one of those sturdy characters who map out a certain routine of life, to whom life is one round of duty well performed, and with whose system of life nothing is permitted to interfere. The morning following the arrival of the unexpected guest, he was up at precisely the same hour that governed his rising every other day in the year. He made no effort to "make up" for the sleep lost in the earlier part of the night. Moreover, he was a lover of nature. The fact that he had watched the sun rise from behind the same hill every clear morning for fifty years, seemed to take nothing from the pleasure with which he watched it on that particular morning, and would continue to watch it as long as strength should be given him to stand in the door of his cottage.

Stanley Lakeman was in many ways much like his father. He had his father's ardent love for the beautiful in nature, and it was never to him an "old story." However, he did not watch the rising of the sun from the rear entrance of the Lakeman cottage. His favorite indulgence was an early morning gallop, usually extending to the top of a hill two miles distant, which commanded even a better view of the rising sun than the back door regularly occupied by his father. This morning he sat on his horse, hat in hand, head thrown back, while the early morning breezes playfully tossed the wavy locks of his brown hair, his eyes (the eyes of an enthusiast) fixed on the tiny line of a crimson disk, as the sun took its first cautious peep above the horizon. He did not move, but the enthusiasm of his eyes deepened as the tiny line gradually transformed itself into a great golden ball.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, "It's a beauty! I can't wonder sometimes that the old pagans couldn't keep from worshiping it. It's about the most worshipful thing I've seen. What do you think about it, Spider?" addressing his horse. "Don't you think life is worth living on a morning like this? Suppose you and I take a run for the hill yonder? What do you say?"

The little animal seemed to understand perfectly the word of her master. There was one brief moment when she seemed to gather all the strength of her lithe body, and the next moment she was off. It was not the half-hearted gallop of the ordinary ride, which is made for the pleasure of the rider alone. Oh, no! Spider ran for the pure pleasure of running. And she ran! She well knew that this one gallop was given over to her to do with as she pleased, and like the master she loved, when she pleased to do a thing, it was done with all the ardor of her nature.

Stanley made no move to interfere. Leaning over he gave her free rein. He felt her bend to the ground as the trees and the fence posts flew past. The warm wind blew his hair wildly about his forehead as he gave himself up to the pony's moment of play. When the crest of the next hill was won, she stopped as a matter of course, and seemed to say: "You, now, are master again."

"Good girl," commended Stanley, as soon as he could regain his breath. "Wouldn't you make the racer now? But you'll never have to do it, little horse. Why, I'd pound the first man who tried to make you a part of his gambling scheme. Do you think we could eat breakfast now? Suppose we go home."

A few minutes later he jumped from his horse in the barnyard, just as his father turned to go indoors.

"It's hard to tell, Stanley," he said, "which enjoyed that ride most, you or the horse."

"She ran just like the wind, father," his son answered "She enjoyed it like a schoolboy."

"She's not the only one who enjoyed it like a schoolboy," returned Bill Lakeman, laughing.

"Well, how's our stranger?" Stanley asked, with his face half buried in a tin washbasin.

"Asleep yet, I think," his father answered. "And unless I am mistaken, he needs all of it he can get."

"Yes, he was about done up," Stanley replied. "I'll go in and see if he is awake. I'll let him use those crutches of Uncle John's if you don't mind."

"Take them along," Bill Lakeman said. "You'll find them in that closet back of the stove."

Stanley opened the door cautiously, intending not to awaken the sleeper, but his precaution was unnecessary. The young man was awake, and evidently in trying to arise had made the unpleasant discovery that there could be no walking for that day at least. His face was consequently clouded. It is not pleasant to be disabled and among strangers, without the necessary means to pay for service rendered. To one of his sensitive nature the pain of that thought was harder to endure than physical suffering. His manliness and fortitude came to his assistance in the latter but shrunk from him in the former. Stanley read something of all this in the troubled look he saw on the other's face when he opened the door, and somehow his respect for the stranger deepened.

"Well, sir, I hope you have had a pleasant sleep," was his cheerful morning greeting.

"Indeed I have," the other answered. "This bed seemed like paradise to me last night. It also made me dream of my grandmother."

"When I was away at school, sleeping on a two-fifty mattress, I used to dream of these old beds, I can tell you," Stanley answered, laughing. "A man never appreciates his beds at home until he gets away once."

"No, and there are many other things at home, I'm thinking, that he doesn't appreciate until he gets away," the other answered sadly.

With Stanley's assistance the stranger was soon able to join Bill Lakeman in the kitchen, which served also as a dining room and to a great extent as living room, in Aunt Sophronia's absence. Bill Lakeman had prepared an appetizing breakfast, and it was steaming on the table when he heard the tap of the crutches and turned to welcome the young stranger quite as cordially as he would had he come to them as invited guest.

In the brief moment Bill Lakeman looked at the young man as he entered, he saw a clear-cut, manly face from which a pair of blue eyes looked straight into his own; light hair, of which there was not a heavy growth; a sensitive mouth which might have denoted weakness had not that trait of character been strictly denied by the square-cut firmness of the chin beneath. All this Bill Lakeman had made that discovery the night before. In this brief period of time the young man had passed from the stranger class into that of friend. He was not aware of this, however, so he

still strove unsuccessfully to put from his mind the ever recurring question of how he was to repay these people for their kindness. If he hadn't – The thought was put from him forcefully, for he knew he had done his duty as he had seen it and would do the same again.

"Well, young man," Bill Lakeman said, "I hope you have an appetite this morning. You see cooking isn't my regular line, and I haven't just got my hand in."

The young man smiled appreciatively. "You need have no fears along that line," he said. He might have confided to them that he had eaten nothing since breakfast of the preceding day, but he thought best to leave them in the dark as to that.

Bill Lakeman might have thought the evident pleasure with which his guest partook of the carefully prepared breakfast was a compliment to his culinary ability, but a certain shrewdness in his glance seemed to say he had guessed a reason far removed from that. There were no questions asked. It became quite evident none would be. There was a certain gratefulness in the breast of the stranger when he realized they would accept him for what they believed him to be, and that there would never be the necessity for them to know his life unless he chose to tell. However, he did choose to tell, for in his life there had never been anything which he wished to hide. The meal was half finished when he raised his eyes and looked straight into those of Bill Lakeman.

"Don't you think it is about time for me to introduce myself?" he said with a smile. "Under the circumstances I think you have a right to know something about me."

"If you do it because you would like to have us know, then we would like to know. If you do it from a sense of duty, it is unnecessary." The words were Bill Lakeman's. The stranger felt that they were characteristic of the bigness of the man.

"I would like to have you know," he said, "My name is Alfred Stewart. My home is in Glendon, Michigan." "And my name, Mr. Stewart, is Lakeman. This is my son Stanley."

When Bill Lakeman had made this simple statement, Alfred turned and looked straight at Stanley Lakeman. It has been said that there are times when men read each other's souls. Be that as it may, we do not know. But as Alfred Stewart and Stanley Lakeman each looked for that moment into the eyes of the other, they were given to know that from henceforth they would be friends. It is well that the question of mutual friendship was settled definitely at that psychological moment, for, had it been hanging in the balance, the next words spoken by Alfred Stewart probably would have added the weight to the wrong side of the scales.

"My coming to you as I did last night must seem very strange," he said. "I will tell you all there is to tell and then you may be the judges. I am a minister of the gospel."

Alfred Stewart was enough a reader of humanity to see the look of disappointment on the faces of his hearers. He vaguely wondered if here they were to have the same effect they had on another occasion not many hours before. Bill Lakeman said with a mirthless laugh:

"Young man, you couldn't have given yourself a worse recommendation in this family. Stanley and I hate preachers as we hate snakes. In fact, we don't think there is much difference. And you probably will think as much less of us when I tell you we are infidels."

Alfred Stewart smiled. He was much less afraid of infidels than of hypocritical Christians. He usually found an infidel perfectly honest and sincere. His quick sense of humor relieved the situation.

"I'm glad, in that case, I didn't tell you I was a preacher last night," he said. "I'm afraid I should have missed that good bed as well as this breakfast." He had not intended this for a diplomatic remark. Had he so intended, it would have failed miserably. As it was, both men looked relieved.

"Furthermore, my own case is worse," he continued. "I can understand that to you the fact that a preacher ever should get to need assistance as I needed it last night, looks a little extraordinary, to say the least. I left Usk early yesterday morning for Bridgewater, where I expected to start a series of meetings. I had a little money; not much, but enough to pay my expenses. When I reached the station- well, something happened; I'd rather not say just what, but I decided to walk. I felt I must reach Bridgewater, and there was nothing to do but forget the distance. So I started. I would have gotten along much better, only I had not saved back enough money to get meals along the way. I had foolish pride, too. I thought once or twice I would stop and ask to cut some wood to get a meal," he went on, "but when the time came I just couldn't do it. I was not above cutting the wood, but in that way it was too much like begging. So I just walked on all day through the heat, with nothing to keep up my strength."

"There isn't much more to tell. You can easily guess the rest. The worst part was my accident, which has placed me in an awkward position, for I may as well tell you frankly that I am not in a position, at present, to pay you for your kindness. If I could have gone on today, it would not have seemed quite so bad. As it is, I can hope only to relieve you of the burden tomorrow."

"No, Mr. Stewart," Stanley said, "You will not be able to walk on that foot tomorrow, the next day, or the next; so you had just as well make up your mind to stay with us that long at least." Stanley glanced at his father as he

made this understatement.

Alfred looked crestfallen. The thought of thus being dependent was a painful one to him. His companions saw this, and their hearts warmed to him again, regardless of their knowledge as to his calling.

"Oh, I can't do that," he said.

"You must." The old smile was back in Stanley's eyes. "You are my patient, you know."

"'Twould be unkind of you," Bill Lakeman said, "to run away because you found I was not a good cook."

There was nothing more to be said. He would find it necessary to stay; that much was evident. Alfred laughed a little constrainedly. "You will at least allow me to write for enough to pay my board, I suppose?"

Bill Lakeman laughed and slapped his guest on the back.

"You mean you want to save your own self-respect? Well, go ahead and write your letter. but in the meantime don't fret. I've got to put the house in order; Sophronia will be back today. She is my sister who keeps house for us," he added, as an explanation to Alfred.

"Why, this is Wednesday, to be sure," Stanley said. "I'll wash the dishes, father, while you straighten the rest of the house. It wouldn't do for Aunt Sophronia to come back and find it upset. She would never go again."

"And I'll sit in this chair and dry them for you," Alfred said.

There was much bustling around for the next hour. The young men had completed their task and had seated themselves in the old back parlor while Bill Lakeman was putting the finishing touches on the room, when the door opened and in walked Aunt Sophronia herself.

"Why, Aunt Sophronia!" Stanley exclaimed. "We were not expecting you so early. I intended meeting you at ten."

"Well, you needn't," she said. "That train's changed time, and I reckon I know the way home myself."

She was in the act of setting down her handbag when her eyes fell upon Alfred Stewart. She stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment. Alfred also looked very much confused. The recognition had been mutual.

"Bill Lakeman!" she said, in so emphatic a tone that he and Stanley felt she was about to bring some accusation against their guest. In fact, the look on Alfred's face strengthened this feeling. "Give that man five dollars!" At these unexpected words Alfred sprang to his feet and held out his hand imploringly. "Don't," he said, "he has paid it a thousand times."

This was something of an exaggeration, but Alfred was excited. When Stanley and his father had recovered from their astonishment, Stanley stepped to Alfred's side and pushed him gently back into his chair.

"When I tell you to jump on that foot, you jump, not before," he said. "Now, Aunt Sophronia, you can tell your story; only don't excite this man again; he's my patient."

"Well, I'll declare!" Aunt Sophronia began. "I don't know what I'd done if it hadn't been for this man. I was just that near distracted I didn't know what to do, I lost that pocketbook you gave me; so when I got into Usk, I didn't have no pocketbook, no ticket, no nothing. I'd come right straight back home, but law me! It costs as much to come home as it did to go on, and I didn't have no money to do either. Well, this young man, he just seen me nearly worrying my head off, and he up and gave me five dollars. I declare I don't know what I'd a done."

Bill Lakeman looked for a moment very straight at Alfred, whose face flushed painfully. "So that's where your money went, is it? That's why you're broke? He asked.

"Yes, Aunt Sophronia," broke in Stanley, laying his hand on Alfred's shoulder, "this young man gave you all the money he had and walked all the way from Usk to Leesburg without a bite to eat."

This was too much for Alfred. Sheer embarrassment forced him to speak. "Oh!" he remonstrated, "it was nothing."

"Oh, no!" Stanley mocked, "it was nothing."

Alfred's embarrassment was very much relieved as Bill Lakeman's hearty laugh rang out.

"Well, my boy," he said, "I guess you'll not insist on writing that letter, will you?"

"No," Alfred said faintly. "I'll not insist."

Then Bill Lakeman went out into the yard, away from the eyes and the ears of the others, and laughed long and heartily. Perhaps he laughed as much at his own expense as at Alfred's, for Alfred was a preacher and Bill Lakeman had always hated preachers.

Stanley and his father had the good sense apparently to forget the occurrence, which seemed such an embarrassing one to their guest. But Aunt Sophronia could not refrain from an occasional "Law me!" as she moved about her household duties. She evidently had plans of her own by which to show Alfred how much she appreciated his kindness, for as the eleventh hour drew near, very appetizing odors came stealing from the regions of the kitchen. Perhaps she guessed that the thoughts of not being able to pay his way had kept the young man from making up for his losses of the previous day at breakfast. At any rate he thought he never had tasted a dinner quite so fine as the one she soon placed before them. This time he felt perfectly free to make the good lady happy by

eating abundantly of the repast she had prepared.

When they had left the table Stanley said: "There's one thing I don't understand; that is, how did you come to get to our place up here? It is away off the road, and your head was not clear enough to have picked it out if you had tried."

"No," Alfred said, "I did not pick it out." Then he told them of his call for aid at the Burnside home, his ejection from the house, its cause, and of the help he had received from Jennie Burnside. Bill Lakeman was quite indignant. He could not understand how Marion Burnside could possibly stoop so low. When Bill Lakeman had gone out, Stanley seated himself on the arm of the chair in which Alfred was reclining and laid his arm on the other's shoulder.

"A short time ago," he said, "I had a talk with a young lady on the subject of infidelity. Since then I have done a great deal of thinking. It's just things like this that puzzle me. Isn't it strange that you should meet Aunt Sophronia and as a result of befriending her you should visit Leesburg when you had no intention whatever of doing so? Arriving in Leesburg, that you should come to this house, of all others- the one there would be the least likelihood of just happening on? It doesn't seem just like accident, does it?"

"To me, the hand of God is quite plain in the matter," Alfred said.

"Perhaps you and Hazel are right; perhaps there is a God after all. I wish I could settle that question."

Alfred looked up quickly and caught a troubled look on Stanley's face. "Don't worry about it," he said. "Some day that question will settle itself for you, and you will know there is a God."

As evening drew near, Stanley detected a question on the face of his friend

"What now?" he said.

"Nothing serious this time," Alfred answered. "But last night sometime I must have lost my books. You know a preacher without books could never be a success. I have been trying to figure out where I could have lost them. I know I had them when Marion Burnside came to the door and bade me good night... Well, we'll not worry about them."

"The way other things have worked out, it would not surprise me to see your books walk in," Stanley bantered. "Shall I go down and see if they are coming up the lane?"

"I don't think I would bother," Alfred returned. "I think they will find the house without help. Suppose we move out where we can call them if we see them passing."

Bill Lakeman, coming up just in time to hear the boy's laughter, smiled to see Stanley, who had shared his antipathy for preachers, enjoying the association of this one so decidedly.

The delightfully cool breezes, which came with the evening, being a pleasing contrast to the heat of the summer day, soon brought Bill Lakeman to his favorite chair, and Aunt Sophronia with her needlework to join the young men in their nook beneath the honeysuckle, and evening had again settled over Leesburg.

CHAPTER 5

"MY MOTHER AMONG THE DAMNED?"

Jennie Burnside, when she left Alfred at the door of the Lakeman cottage and galloped away into the night, had been a very thoughtful girl. She realized she had done a peculiar thing and that, had her father known, he would have been very angry. Yet she experienced a peculiar satisfaction with life in general.

Surrounded as she had always been with the comforts and luxuries of life, there seemed to be no reason why her life should not be perfectly happy and carefree. Yet Jennie Burnside had not been happy. There had come into her life, when her mother died, a shadow which never had lifted, and as time went on and her own mind had developed, she had tried to think and reason away the shadow, but the only help available- books from her father's library- had succeeded only in making deeper the blackness. When she had tried to talk to the minister, thinking one so learned in the things of God could tell her all she desired to know, she had found only that the burden on her heart never could be lifted; that throughout this life and the eternity to follow, it must remain the same.

As she rode along these thoughts came crowding into her mind, and the sorrow she had forgotten for a time returned. She scarcely noticed when the little horse slowed to a walk and almost stopped by the roadside. "I can't help it," she murmured. "I suppose it is wicked; but I'm afraid I never could be happy in heaven. Why, Daisy, what is the matter? Oh!" In the moonlight, Jennie had discovered a small black bag which at once she remembered having seen that evening in the hand of Alfred Stewart. "It must have been left when I had him get onto the horse." Jennie smiled at the recollection. "What shall I do with it? I can't take it up there tonight. Tomorrow will do quite as well."

With these thoughts in mind, she touched the pony lightly with the tip of her whip and was soon stealing quietly into the icy grandeur of her own home. On this night the shadow of her life seemed to clamor for thought: and, strive as she might, she could not put the matter from her mind to keep the sorrowful look from her eyes. Jennie had loved her mother devotedly and at best would never have ceased to miss her and long for her companionship. The very coldness of her father and the equal coldness of his religion, made this feeling more intense. And tonight the last conversation she had had with her mother came back so vividly that tears were brought to her eyes by the memory. Her father had been reading as usual from the Bible, and she had noticed a peculiar expression on her mother's face. Jennie had that moment realized that all her religious training had come from her father; that her mother had never spoken to her of religion or of God. When they were alone she had asked: "Mother, don't you believe in God?" Her mother had looked at her doubtfully for a moment, and then said sadly:

"I don't know, daughter, but I want you to believe. I want you always to believe."

"But, mother, why don't you?"

"I have tried to, dear, tried, oh, so hard; but it seems I just can't. There are so many conflicting theories in the world. I never could decide which was right. Again, when I sit in church and hear the saying, 'God is love,' I seem to see on every hand evidence that God is not a God of love, but of vengeance.

But, mother, if you should die feeling that way, what would become of your soul?" Jennie had cried, almost in alarm. She could hear yet the quiet sadness of her mother's voice as she answered;

"I suppose I would be lost."

"Then why don't you try to believe?" she had asked again.

"I have tried," her mother answered. "But, Jennie, I cannot; at least I could not love God. My mother and father were good, kind-hearted people, but neither of them believe. If now I would accept religion and join the church, I would do it knowing that for their disbelief and infidelity they were being punished in hell. Your father read tonight, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' My mother among the damned! She only disbelieved because she could not be true to herself and believe. She could not see the way. No! No! I would much rather believe there is no God, that when life is done all is ended. There is some comfort in that thought; in the other there is none."

Mrs. Burnside answered bitterly: "If it is true, and my mother is among the damned, I could never be happy in heaven. I would rather share her exile with her.

One short week later, in the quiet, shady cemetery just north of Leesburg, Mrs. Burnside was laid to rest, and the shadow of her own life settled over the life of her daughter. For Jennie believed. She could not even comfort herself by doubting the existence of God. She had never again enjoyed her elegant home or the pleasures of life around her, for the books in her father's library told her that in the place where her mother had gone there were "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

"Oh, surely, surely God could not do it," she moaned tonight, as she seemed to hear the words and see again the sad sweet face of her mother. Into her own heart there crept a feeling of rebellion. "Oh, if only I could know." The very intensity of her own prayer surprised her, and strangely there came before her mind again the picture of the white, worn face of the stranger. "Another example," she reasoned. "He is spending his time working for God, and just see how God lets him suffer. Oh mother, I am like you. I can't see the way; I can't see the way."

During the tumult of her thoughts, Jennie had thrown herself into a chair in her room, utterly unmindful of her surroundings. As she raised her head her eyes lighted on the book satchel at her feet.

"Oh, I wonder if he could help me to see. If I only dared ask him! Why not?" She must see him tomorrow to return his books. That was the work in life he had chosen. Somehow she felt she could talk to him felt that he would understand. Strangely comforted, she sought her bed, determined that on the morrow she would make one more effort to learn of the things of God, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER 6

TO THOSE WHO "SIT IN DARKNESS"

When Bill Lakeman joined Stanley and Alfred in the retreat they had found beneath the honeysuckle, he was surprised to find that he experienced for his young guest nothing of the aversion he usually entertained for preachers. There was no restraint in the smile with which he greeted them.

"Life is worth living on an evening like this," he said. "Look at the sun there; it just naturally hates to go down."

"It is beautiful, isn't it?" Alfred replied. "Just see the color of the sky there above the trees. I always feel I

would like to be an artist when I see a sky like that.”

“Yes,” Stanley said: “this old house with its ivy vine, Aunt Sophronia knitting on the veranda, the trees and the hill for a background, finished with a sunset like that- who would not want to paint it?”

“Truly,” Alfred said, “the Creator of this universe is an artist?”

He had not intended to say that. Unconsciously he had spoken aloud. Both Stanley and his father understood, yet a strange quiet fell upon them. Neither seemed to know what to say. Their confusion was soon forgotten, for borne on the evening breeze the even rhythm of hoof beats came to them.

“We evidently are going to have company,” Stanley said, then laughed. “We were saying a moment ago your books might walk in. I do believe they are coming in on horseback.”

“I’m afraid not,” Alfred returned. “Probably I shall never see them again.”

By this time emerging from the trees, the horse and rider came into view.

“Why, it’s Jennie Burnside,” Bill Lakeman said. “What can bring her here?”

As the girl drew near, Alfred was wondering vaguely how he would find words to express his gratitude for the assistance she had given him. He was also aware that a meeting with her would be embarrassing. She sprang lightly from the horse and came up the walk with the easy grace of youth. Alfred almost gasped when he became aware that in her hand she was carrying his books.

She came directly to the group beneath the honeysuckle, nodding brightly to Aunt Sophronia as she passed. When she stood beside Bill Lakeman she stopped and said: “Mr. Lakeman, last night it was given to me to come in contact with one who was badly in need of assistance which I was unable to give myself, so I took the liberty of sending him to you. I felt sure you would gladly render the assistance necessary. I see I was not mistaken.” Before Bill Lakeman had found words to reply, Alfred had struggled to his feet and said warmly:

“Indeed you were not, and Miss Burnside, I want now to express to you both my thanks for what you have done, but do not find words at my command. I only can leave you to guess the extent of my gratitude.” Stanley, who could endure anything better than spoken praise, interrupted: “Well, Jennie, those are pretty speeches, but I am most curious to know what that thing you are carrying can be.”

“Oh,” she answered, “I found it last night where I think this gentleman must have left it, by the roadside.”

“You don’t mean-“

“Yes,” Alfred answered his unspoken question, “it’s my books.”

Stanley looked at Alfred for a moment, then, humor predominating, laughed heartily.

Jennie and Bill Lakeman did not understand it, but each was more at ease, and when Aunt Sophronia had placed a chair for her, Jennie felt much of the dread with which she had looked forward to this interview slipping from her. With characteristic straightforwardness she turned to Alfred. “Mr.-“

“Steward,” he supplied, seeing her hesitation.

“Mr. Stewart,” she said, “you said last evening when you were talking to my father, that you were a minister of the gospel, did you not?”

“It is my pleasure to try to represent Christ,” he answered. “I believe he has called me to do so.”

“It may seem strange to you, but it was that statement in particular which brought me here tonight. I have felt for some time that I must talk to someone who understands God and his work, but have shrunk from speaking to them. I felt perhaps you could understand and help me.”

“I shall be more than glad to do anything in my power,” he said gently.

“Well, you see, I am not an infidel,” she continued; “but, oh, I am sometimes so much afraid I will be!”

“What, you, Jennie!” Stanley exclaimed. “I thought-“

“Yes, I know,” she interrupted, “and so do others, but often those nearest us little know the thoughts of our hearts. It may seem strange that I should speak of it in this way. But I never can tell you how much it means to me. I tried to ask our minister, but was only unhappy as a result. I feel sometimes that the Bible cannot be true. I can see God only as a monster, when I should reverence him as a father. Mr. Stewart, tell me, how can I love a God who would send my mother to hell? Who could place her eternally among the damned because she could not understand, because she could not comprehend him and his work?”

The girl’s voice ended in a faint sob. A sympathetic silence was over those who listened. Bill Lakeman and Stanley felt she had asked Alfred a question for which no answer existed. They waited eagerly for him to speak. When the words finally came, his face and voice were softened with suppressed emotion.

“You couldn’t,” he said. “God himself would not expect you to.” The faces of his hearers showed how utterly unexpected his answer had been. Alfred continued; “There are so many conflicting theories in the world, taught in the name of truth, that I am not surprised your mother found it impossible to see the way. So often do those occupying the pulpits of our land picture to us the God of vengeance that it is not surprising we grow to think of him in that way. When I look about me and see the teachings in the world, in the name of religion, I am not surprised that

thinking men and women are drawn into infidelity. The only surprising thing to me is that there remain any who believe.”

“Mr. Stewart, that is strange talk for a minister,” Bill Lakeman said.

“The fact that it is strange,” Alfred answered with feeling, “does not make it any the less true. Look at it yourself for a moment. Go to the ministers of your town and ask them what they believe regarding the future state. They will agree this far: they all believe in heaven and hell, a place of reward and a place of punishment. They tell us the good people go to heaven, the bad to hell, a never-ending punishment, “but,” says our thinking man or woman, ‘humanity cannot be divided into just two classes.’ You know the statement: “There is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us,” etc. That is true. We are such a strange mixture of good and evil that no honest person will claim to being either. Look around you in the world. For every good man, I mean a really good man, and for every bad man, there are hundreds who could be called neither. Between these two extremes will be found every phase of human character, no two having exactly the same mixture of good and evil. Where would the dividing line come? What amount of the mixture of evil would God allow to enter heaven and what amount of good goes into hell?

“Our doctors of divinity are ready with the answer: They who believe in Christ may enter heaven; they who believe not must enter hell; and we are left to believe that the murderer who accepts Christ before he goes to the gallows is among the fortunate ones who stand before the throne of God and sing his praises throughout eternity, while his poor victim whose life he took without one moment’s notice and who had no such opportunity must spend eternity in hell.”

As Alfred paused Bill Lakeman spoke, his voice hard and bitter. “All that being true, can you see any reason why we should not be infidels?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered emphatically. “I see one all-important reason why you should not.”

“And that is what, may I ask?”

“Simply that it is not true.”

Silence followed. With unseeing eyes they watched the sun slip behind the leafy screen of the trees as evening settled over the valley.

Bill Lakeman faced the young man suddenly.

“Mr. Stewart,” he said, “don’t you believe the Bible?”

“Indeed I do,” Alfred answered.

“I quite agree in all you have said regarding the religious world,” Mr. Lakeman continued, “but cannot quite understand your position. You left the impression that the divines were wrong, in their answer regarding who should be saved, and gave us to understand that you are not in sympathy with the thought that only those who believe in Christ are to be saved. Does not the Bible which you have just professed to believe say, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned’?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “but the same Bible also says every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Him.”

Bill Lakeman watched the first shadows of evening playing in the depth of the grove as he thoughtfully pondered the possibilities of the quotation Alfred had just used.

“I suppose,” he said at last, “you believe that verse proves that all will be saved. I have investigated that side of the question also, Mr. Stewart, and am sorry to say it cannot be substantiated.” Disappointment was evident in his voice as he spoke. Perhaps unconsciously he had hoped his own position would be disproved. Now a certain hopeless expression settled on his face, and something in his entire attitude seemed to say, “It is of no use.”

“You are right, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred answered, “that position cannot be substantiated.” Then, seeing the surprise on the faces of those to whom he spoke, he continued: “Might it not be possible that the trouble lies farther back- that we cannot reach a correct conclusion because our starting point was wrong? We seem to be taking the starting position that all who do not enter what we choose to term heaven, must of necessity be sweltering in that furnace which in our minds we called hell. Might not the trouble lie there? Is it true that regardless of all the varying characteristics, regardless of the fact that no two persons contain exactly the same amount of good, or develop to the same degree of perfection, there are just two places of consignment? They are either ushered into heaven to dwell in the presence of God and Christ or are to be sent to hell, there to endure the pangs of never-ending torture?”

“Just what do you mean?” Jennie asked breathlessly.

“Christ said,” Alfred answered, “In his Father’s house were many mansions, but he went to prepare a place for his disciples, that where he was, there they might be also. Now it is quite evident the mansions mentioned there were not where Christ would be, or were not where he intended his disciples to spend their eternity. Yet they were mansions. Then think again. Christ gives us this scene: It is the time of judgment- Christ sitting on the throne with his holy angels around him passing judgment on the nations. He has divided them into two divisions which he

speaks of as sheep and goats. Those representing the sheep were gathered on the right hand; those representing the goats, on the left. Turning to those on the right hand whom he speaks of as righteous, he uses these words: 'Come, ye blessed of my 'Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' "

"But, Mr. Stewart," Jennie interrupted, "do you not think that simply means they are to enter heaven?"

"In using the word 'simply' you narrow your question, Miss Burnside," Alfred answered, "until I am compelled to give a negative reply. 'That kingdom undoubtedly would represent heaven to them, but I do not think it can be that heaven which is the dwelling place of God, Christ, and his disciples. Paul said he knew a man who had been caught up to the third heaven. Now which of the three heavens is that heaven to which these blessed were sent? This much seems quite clear. It was not the place to which Christ intended taking his disciples, for he said this kingdom had been prepared from the foundation of the world. While to his disciples he said, 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' (John 14:3) He was speaking here just a short time before his crucifixion; the heaven for his disciples had not yet been prepared. "Again, in the judgment scene, when he had given the blessed the reason for their reward, they were astonished and did not seem to understand. He explained that in feeding, clothing, and helping his disciples (notice he speaks of his disciples as distinctly separate class) they had helped him. Their service had been unconscious service. Do you think the Disciples of Christ would not have known? Do you think they would show surprise when Christ gave them a reward? No, they had looked forward and expected a reward from the time they had entered his service. It is quite evident to me that these were not professed believers in Christ. Perhaps the false teachings of the world had so confused them that they, too, could not see the way."

Stanley Lakeman, who had listened intently while Alfred was speaking, was pacing slowly up and down the narrow path. This in itself was evidence of deep thought. The expression of earnestness on his face as he stopped suddenly and faced Alfred, made that young man lift his heart in prayer that god would help him lead this man to the light.

"Your thought is, if I understand you," Stanley said, "that there is a heaven prepared for those who have done good in this life because it was good and not because they were followers of Christ, separate and distinct from that reward which will go to the Christian?"

"So that passage would seem to imply," Alfred answered. "To put it in other words, we might call it different degrees of reward. Paul seemed to have that thought in mind when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:41). He said: 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star different from another star in glory.' In the next verse he adds, 'So also is the resurrection of the dead.' In the twenty-third verse, speaking of the resurrection of the dead, he uses this expression: 'Every man in his own order.' We read in John's account of his wonderful vision on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 20:12) these words: 'And I saw the dead, small and great (that would seem to imply all) stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' The thirteenth verse repeats that assertion; 'And they were judged every man according to their works.'

"It is evident that all men will not accomplish the same amount of good; hence if they are to be judged 'according to their works' we see how it will be necessary that there be many degrees of glory, as Paul expresses it, 'for one star differeth from another star in glory.' That would make it seem that the rewards of the next life would be as varied as the heavens. Let us illustrate it in this manner; suppose you were the judge in one of our court rooms and two cases were brought before you for trial. One was a murderer, who for worldly gain had taken the life of a fellow creature. The other a poor mother, sick and out of work, who had stolen one loaf of bread to feed hungry babies. You would try both cases and say, 'I will judge them according to their works.' 'Then you would proceed to pronounce a sentence of life imprisonment on both. You would hardly be consistent, would you? Yet that is what the religious world would have us believe Christ will do. No! No! Paul understood better. He said, "Every man in his own order."

"Mr. Stewart," Stanley said, "I hope you are right; I sincerely hope you are right."

"Yes," his father agreed, "that would lighten the situation greatly. I can assure you I am no infidel by choice. Several times I have thought I had reached a solution of the question, only to find myself groping in deeper darkness. What you have said tonight makes me anxious to hear more. And, Mr. Stewart, I think Jennie and Stanley will sanction what I am about to say. This is a big question and an important one, If you will do so, we would be glad to have you, during the evenings which are to follow, tell us as much as possible of your belief along these lines. If you should enable us to see the way, you will have done us a far greater service than we ever have done or ever could do for you."

Before Alfred could frame a reply, Jennie Burnside arose from her chair and held out her hand to him. "Mr. Stewart," she said, "if you were ever lost in the dark and had despaired of ever finding the light again, you can

understand how much this means to us. If you will give us the benefit of your enforced visit with us, we shall be very glad. If you consent I will come again tomorrow night.”

“I shall be glad to tell you all I know of the plan of salvation,” he returned. “We might have a sort of round table. Could you bring your Bibles?” Alfred asked.

“Yes, indeed,” Stanley answered. “And, Jennie, if this preacher gets too ‘long-winded’ and keeps you out late, I’ll take Spider and ride home with you.”

So it was arranged, and Alfred lifted his heart to God in thanksgiving that thus the way was opened before him that the gospel in its fullness might be presented to those who “sit in darkness.”

CHAPTER 7

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

No word was spoken between Bill Lakeman and Alfred as they watched Stanley accompany Jennie to the gate and assist her to mount. She sat with the easy grace of one who is often in the saddle, and as she rode away into the gathering gloom, the movements of her lithe body blending perfectly with that of her steed, made a pleasing picture. Stanley watched her disappear among the trees. “I cannot see how it is possible,” he said as he rejoined Alfred and his father, “for a man like Marion Burnside to be the father of a girl like Jennie. I could not help thinking, as I watched her, how unlike they are.”

“She is much like her mother,” his father returned, “Mrs. Burnside was a very fine woman. We all felt she was wasted as the wife of Marion Burnside for financial success alone can never make a man. Mrs. Burnside never seemed happy. I never suspected she was in any manner an unbeliever. She always went to church with her husband, although now I recall never having heard of her becoming a church member. We never know. We never know.”

The quiet of evening seemed to settle over the three as they still stood beneath the honeysuckle. Far down the hill, from among the willows which fringed the creek, a firefly darted out, lighting up the evening like a tiny meteor gliding by, then all was darkness again. Somewhere nearby a cricket sent out his shrill call on the evening air and was answered by a lone frog in a far-away swamp. These, however, were only the beginning. Other crickets joined their voices, and as if awakened by the call of their mates, other inhabitants of the shadowed swamp took up the chorus until the valley was a-ring with the sounds of night. From over in the meadow beyond the barn came the wailing notes of the whippoorwill as he reiterated over and over his command.

Silently, for the spell of evening was on them, Bill Lakeman led the way into the house and lighted the lamp. Alfred dropped into a chair, with his crutch lying idly on his arm. Stanley walked to the window and gazed at the dim outlines of the trees of the grove. Bill Lakeman stood regarding intently but not seeing the lamp he had just lighted.

“Are you Doctor Lakeman?”

As Stanley turned quickly, his eyes fell on a boy of some six or eight summers, standing in the doorway. In the dim light he made a strange picture. The clothing which covered, not adorned, the frail body evidently had been made from cloth which had served and served well some previous purpose. Nor was this all: It’s life in its present condition had been lengthened and relengthened by the addition of many a patch. In some instances patch placed upon patch revealed the fact that the patching process had begun long ago, nor was it yet at an end. However, it was not to the patched clothing which made the picture. Perhaps it was the air with which that clothing was worn, or it might have been the unconscious grace with which the battered felt hat, many sizes too large, had been removed and was now held gracefully between two small brown hands. It may have been all this, yet it was more the proud poise of the small curly head, the anxious light in the great dark eyes.

Stanley came forward to meet him and led him more directly into the circle of light. In the soft, almost affectionate tone he always used with children, he said:

“I am Doctor Lakeman, my boy. What can I do for you?”

“My mother would like for you to come at once. Baby Mary is very sick. Mother says, “Please hurry. “

The little voice was subdued, almost to a whisper, by the near proximity of tears. Stanley threw an arm across his shoulder and drew him gently to his side. “Where does your mother live, sonny? Which is the quickest way to go?”

“We live down on the levee,” the child returned. “It’s quickest to go down past the Smith place on the highway. It’s farther down through town.”

“All right. Suppose you wait here for me. Perhaps I’ll need you to show me the way. Do you think you could ride with me on a horse?”

The child's eyes gladdened. One of the dreams of his life had been to some day ride a beautiful horse like those he had seen back on grandfather's farm ever and ever so long ago.

Stanley was gone only a moment. Bill Lakeman had disappeared as soon as the child's appeal had been given, and by the time Stanley emerged, medicine case in hand, his father was leading Spider, saddled and bridled, to the stoop.

"Thank you, father. That was a big help," his son said as he threw himself into the saddle and held out his hand to the boy. His father had been too quick for him. He had lifted the boy into his place almost as soon as Stanley had settled himself. The dumb appeal in the child's eyes had stirred Bill Lakeman deeply.

"Do your best, boy, do your best," he said to Stanley as he started off. Stanley only nodded his reply. But Bill Lakeman knew his son's fighting spirit had been aroused and that he would fight with his might. Stanley also knew that in spirit his father would be fighting with him, and he felt he must win. Stanley had received many such an eleventh-hour call, and he instinctively knew that in this case he had been called almost, if not quite, too late. The anxiety and appeal in the child's eyes, the almost hopeless tone in his voice had conveyed his message well. Stanley held the boy tightly and gave the pony free rein. She ran as she had run once before that day, only now there was no spirit of frolic in her running. Spider knew her master- knew that now he depended on her and the need was very great.

CHAPTER 8

A BATTLE WITH DEATH

Leesburg is not all beautiful, not all homelike, not all comfortable, not all peaceful. Scarcely ten blocks removed from the elegant home of Squire Parsons one might enter that portion of the city known as the levee; so near, yet so far removed from the peace and quiet of that Leesburg which considered itself respectable; for to live on the levee was to be an outcast from all that was respectable, as Leesburg viewed respectability.

Here, grouped around Mike Farrell's saloon, were the dwellings of the poor and the dissolute. Shanties they were where sickly, sad-faced women, broken in body and spirit, and dirty quarrelsome children endured day after day of life as it came, not daring to look into the future with its hopeless aspect, having no ambitions, no dreams, where smiles never came, and where hearts were hardened beyond tears. Even the grasses and trees which grew prolifically in other parts of the city seemed smitten by the spirit of the place, and after battling fitfully for life, gave up the struggle as hopeless and died.

Leaving Mike Farrell's place and going north along the levee, up past the place where the highway skirted the northern end of Strong Lake and crossed the bridge, above the fallen sycamore tree which dipped its topmost branches in the waters of Turkey Creek, just before the waters of that little stream lost themselves with a last contented murmur in the waters of the lake, on around the bend in the road, a trail suddenly leaves the highway and loses itself among the trees. Perhaps one hundred yards from this trail a tiny cabin nestled, protected by the foliage of a great oak tree which grew by its side. This cabin was in some respects not unlike its neighbors on the other side of the levee. It needed no keen observer to tell that poverty had here a permanent abode. However, it was also evident there was a vast difference in the poverty which dwelt here and that which had its dwelling among the shacks around Mike Farrell's saloon. For here, poverty dwelt alone. It's boon companion, squalor, never had been permitted to enter.

There were no shades to the windows. They were protected from within only by clean, white muslin curtains, while their outer protection was tiny vines of morning-glory, bravely climbing the white twine strings placed by careful hands to assist them in their upward aspirations.

The cabin consisted of three small, unfinished rooms. The smallest of the three served as a combined kitchen and dining room. From this, one ascended two steps and entered the largest room in the house. There were no carpets on the floors, and the entire room was bare of ornamentation as it was also practically bare of furniture. A box, around which curtains were hung and on which a small oil lamp was burning, stood in one corner. Two chairs, two beds, and a mantel on which the remains of a broken mirror had been placed, made up the balance of the furnishings of the room. Even the scrupulous cleanliness of the place could not hide its pitiful poverty. One thing only seemed to suggest that anything but poverty ever had been the lot of those who called this home; one of the chairs was a heavy oak rocker, not of elaborate design; it did not betoken wealth, yet seemed to belong to that condition of comfort which never had known the extremes of either wealth or poverty. It seemed strangely out of place among the other crude, homemade furniture.

On one of the beds, lying so quietly as to have the appearance of death, was a child. A mass of brown, curly

hair lay in confusion on the pillow, where it had been brushed back from a face from which every particle of color had fled. The eyes were closed, and only the gentle rising and falling of the muslin covering gave evidence that life had not fled. There was only one other occupant of the room. Beside the bed on which the child lay, a woman knelt, her face buried in her hands, her lips moving as if in prayer.

"Mother's here, baby Mary, mother's here. Yes..." the soft mother voice trailed off into silence. The little one had stirred uneasily and then lay again in the same immovable stupor.

Oh, would he never come? Would he never come? Her eyes filled with agony, the mother watched the clock on the mantel. How slowly the minutes dragged, and yet every tick, tick, of the clock fell on the mother's heart like the dread footsteps of approaching death. The woman arose, walked to the window, and peered out into the darkness. Seeing nothing, she returned once more to the bedside of the child and fell on her knees, this time voicing the prayer of her heart.

"O God," she pleaded, "don't let baby die before the doctor gets here. Guide Joey, dear God. Guide Joey."
Ah, when the heart is full;
When bitter thoughts come
Crowding thickly up for utterance.....
How much the bursting heart
May pour itself in prayer.

The mother prayed on.

It is possible that had one questioned her closely under more favorable circumstances on the subject of prayer, she would have answered, as would many others of that great throng who believe so ardently in prayer, but who consider the day of revelation past, and who expect no answer from God except that he should "speak peace to the heart" or "guide the mind"; "Oh, we can't expect miracles now. That is all in the past."

However that may be, tonight, in the anguish of her heart, the creeds of the day were forgotten, and she only realized herself as an afflicted child voicing her greatest need to a loving parent. She realized all too keenly the near approach of death unless help came. She could only make the appeal: "'Don't let baby Mary die.'"

Who shall say that the ear of love did not hear? Or that the Omnipotent arm was shortened? We only know that when a few minutes later Stanley entered with his little guide, he found the mother still praying by the side of her sleeping child. So earnest was her prayer that she did not know when Joey pushed open the door and the tall figure of the young doctor entered.

"Mama, mama, " the boy cried. "Here's the doctor! See, I found him, mama!"
"Thank heaven."

As the woman awoke and extended her hand to Stanley, he scarcely could suppress an exclamation of surprise. His profession had brought him many times in touch with those living on the levee, and he knew most of them by sight. He felt that he certainly knew them as a class. His practiced eye told him that here was one far removed in the spirit of things from the environment which surrounded her. The face of the woman bespoke refinement. Her soft, dark hair fell in graceful waves, back from a forehead smooth and white. Great dark eyes gazed at him appealingly from under finely arched brows. The lips were full and red, parting over a set of even white teeth. Stanley saw all this and more; saw the hunted look of the mother whose baby is about to be taken from her, and realized that those deep, dark eyes with their agony of appeal were saying to him, "You are my only hope." She was young, it seemed to Stanley as he gazed at her; far too young for the lines of care already showing on her face. It was a beautiful face, beautiful with a certain spiritual beauty which defied description. Her garments, like those of her son, showed evidence of repeated mendings, yet were worn with a certain dignity and grace, an unconsciousness of manner which added much to the pleasing personality of the woman.

"You are Doctor Lakeman, I believe?" she asked in tones soft and musical. "I never can tell you how glad I am to have you come."

"And I am glad to be here, if I can be of service to you," he returned. "Your son has told me your name, Mrs. Bennett, so I feel that we are already acquainted."

"Yes, " Mrs. Bennett answered, laying her hand affectionately on the boy's head. "I had no one else to entrust with my message. I am afraid I have a very sick baby," she continued, moving near the bed. "She has been ill for several days, but not until this afternoon did I realize how very sick she was. I am so glad you came, doctor; I was almost afraid I had sent too late."

Stanley moved nearer the bed and gazed with professional eyes at the unconscious child. A moment later, when he raised his eyes once more to the face of the woman beside him, doubt was written very plainly on the face.

"I wish you had sent for me sooner," he said.

"I didn't dare send," she answered, almost in a whisper, "until I knew my baby's life depended on it. I could

see no way to pay for the service.”

“I am very sorry you felt that way,” he returned earnestly. “I would have been glad to come. However, now that I am here we will start the fight at once, will we not?”

The smile came quickly to the face of the mother. His confident tone gave her hope and made her feel she was not fighting alone.

Stanley laid aside the light coverlet and carefully examined the sick child.

“Now, Mrs. Bennett, two glasses half filled with water, please.... There,” as Mrs. Bennett returned. “Now I think we are ready.”

And so began the long vigil at the bedside of the stricken child. Hours came and went, but the young doctor would not leave his post. Had Stanley been a praying man, he would have prayed. As it was, he knew of no strength on which to lean but his own, and in this hour it seemed fearfully deficient. After a while he induced the young mother to lie down while he battled on.

“We will need your strength tomorrow,” he said, when she hesitated.

Once during the night, while the mother slept fitfully, Stanley entered the kitchen to procure a necessary mixing vessel and made the discovery that the larder was empty. He knew that the little mother and Joey had had no supper that night. Why oh, why, he pondered, was there so much inequality in the world? Why should this little mother be denied the necessities of life for herself and children when many of the women he knew squandered fabulous amounts on frivolities? Stanley also knew that to the sensitive nature of the mistress of this destitute home charity would be felt to be degrading. He quietly slipped one silver dollar into a dish in a cupboard and once more turned his attention to the child.

By this tem exhaustion had so far deepened the sleep of the poor, tired mother that she did not hear the patter of bare feet on the floor of the cabin, nor see the anxiety in the eyes of little Joey as he stole quietly to the doctor’s side.

“You should be in bed and asleep, sonny,” Stanley said. But the child was not to be put off.

“Doctor, why don’t my papa come home? Don’t he know baby Mary is sick? Mama cried and cried tonight. Why don’t he come?”

“Perhaps he will come in the morning. Perhaps he couldn’t get home last night,” Stanley said soothingly.

“Well, will his eyes look like this?” The child’s eyes were fixed in a glassy stare. “And will mamma be afraid? And won’t there be any money to buy bread?”

Stanley’s arm stole around the boy. The curly head was pulled over on his shoulder.

“Those questions are entirely too big for a little head like yours to worry over,” he said. “Yes, I think there will be money to buy bread. Now go to sleep and don’t worry any more about it tonight. I think it will be all right.” The little lad crept back to his bed reassured. Those small childish shoulders, already carrying entirely too much of this world’s burdens, felt that in some manner the load had been lifted; that the dark-haired doctor would see that it all came out right. With mind once more at rest he fell asleep, but Stanley felt that the mystery of the woman was explained; knew now, why and by what means she had been dragged from her rightful station to spend her days in hopeless poverty.

For the next hour Stanley worked on unmolested. Once he was rewarded by seeming consciousness on the part of the child, but it was only for a moment. The old stupor returned. Still he fought on doggedly.

“I must win. I must!” he murmured. In his mind he could still see the trust in the mother’s great dark eyes, and in fancy could see that look give way to fear and be shortly followed by despair. The task seemed hopeless. His knowledge and experience told him that effort on his part was useless, that it was only a matter of hours until death should come, and he knew that when life left, the greatest comfort and source of strength would be taken from the life of the woman.

Bearing his burden of responsibility, heavier because he knew of no God on whom to rely, he walked slowly the length of the room and leaned heavily against the mantel. It was quite evident he was battling in his own mind over his course of procedure. He seemed to have reached no definite conclusion when a moment later he again returned to the child and lifted the little hand from its resting place on the coverlet. Unconsciously his trained fingers sought the pulse and his face whitened perceptibly. Whatever he had learned, it was evidently not encouraging.

“I might just as well do it,” he whispered. “There’s no other chance.”

Swiftly his hands flew over the little vials in his case. Without hesitation he seized one of them, and as swiftly lifted a tiny instrument from another section. It was done in a moment. The child scarcely moved when the injection was made, and Stanley stepped back to watch for results. He knew that in fifteen minutes he would call the mother to see her dying child, or he would give her hope. His eyes sought the clock on the mantel and then once more returned to the face of the child, from which they did not wander again as the moments, not slowly now, glided by. Five minutes passed. No change. He had expected none. Ten minutes. Stanley leaned forward that he might not fail to see the slightest change. Eleven. He moved the lamp until its rays fell directly on the child’s face. Twelve. He

lifted the hand once more and let his fingers lie on the pulse. The heart had almost stopped beating. Thirteen. The muscles of his own face had become rigid, and in his eyes hopelessness seemed battling for a place.

“Oh, if it should fail!” he muttered. Fourteen. Stanley leaned forward suddenly, a gleam of hope relieving the rigidity of his expression. It had been only the tiniest flutter of the pulse, yet it had been the sign for which he had waited. Slowly that minute passed; but with its passing, hope had grown into assurance. Stanley leaned back in his chair, a gleam of triumph in his eyes.

“Thank God!” he ejaculated under his breath, but did not know what he said.

CHAPTER 9

A DOUBLE BURDEN BORNE ALONE

Stanley watched carefully but no longer anxiously as one by one other evidences of his triumph came to him. Then he stepped across the room and laid his hand on the shoulder of the sleeping mother. She sprang up quickly, fear written upon every line of her face. When she saw the look in his eyes, her own gladdened questioningly.

“Yes,” he answered her unspoken question, “your child will live.”

“Oh!” she murmured, her voice breaking in a sob. “How can I ever thank you for what you have done? I only hope that the God of heaven may bring to you his choicest blessings. . Oh, baby, baby! Mother is so glad, so glad.” There was no keeping them back. The tears would come. She sank once more on her knees by the side of the bed and sobbed out her relief. Stanley, who was contending with a strange lump in his throat, walked to the window and, lifting the white muslin curtain, gazed out into the night. What was that lying on the walk? Surely he saw the thing move. Then he knew. It was a man- a drunken man who had fallen and was trying vainly to regain his feet. Ah! He had succeeded, and staggering forward one or two steps, fell heavily against the door of the cabin.

“Oh!”

Stanley turned as the smothered cry of fear fell on his ears. Mrs. Bennett was standing in the center of the floor, wide-eyes and frightened.

“Oh!” she said. “It’s John! What shall we do?”

“I think from the looks of things we had better get him into the house and into bed,” Stanley said. “Shall I open the door?”

“Of course,” she said. “I think I had forgotten you were here. You never can know what it means, this watching for him to come home and know he will come like this. Sometimes I think I never can live through it.”

“Are you in danger when he is like that? Is he ever violent?” Stanley asked.

“Not often,” she returned. But Stanley knew from the hesitation with which she replied that her burden of dread was greater than she had cared to tell him.

He pulled the door open carefully, and into the room tumbled what might have been a man. Stanley was only conscious that a pair of bleared eyes glared out at him from puffy, swollen cheeks. A stiff hat was mashed down on his head almost to his ears. His coat was torn and dirty. His shoes were almost off his feet. A feeling of revulsion swept over Stanley as he realized that this man was the husband of the woman at his side and the father of little Joey. Oh, the awful inconsistencies of this world!

The man, or rather animal, for he had sunk to that level, did not attempt to rise, but continued to glare at Stanley. He turned his eyes on his wife accusingly and brought them once more to Stanley’s face. That young man felt his blood boil and an insane desire to kick the man at his feet.

“What are you doing in my house?” the wretch demanded of Stanley.

“Oh, John!” the reproach in the woman’s voice was painful. “It’s the doctor who came to see baby Mary. Baby Mary is awfully sick. The doctor has been with us all night.”

“B’g pardon, sir,” John Bennett said thickly, as he tried in vain to regain his feet. “N-no offense meant. O-only wanted to know.”

Stanley could scarcely understand the words, the tongue which tried to utter them being almost paralyzed with the effect of liquor. He stooped and assisted the man to stand, by no means an easy task. John Bennett tried to continue the conversation.

“Do all y’ can for the baby. Think I’ll go to bed m’self.”

But Stanley set him down in a chair near by, handling him in much the manner that a schoolmaster would a naughty boy.

“I think I had better fix you up a bit,” he said, as he mixed a glass of medicine and held it to the drunken man’s lips. It was swallowed greedily, and as Stanley turned to set aside the glass he had used, John Bennett arouse and

threw himself on the bed. Mrs. Bennett gasped as the soiled clothing came in contact with the clean, white coverlet. "I had intended to undress him," Stanley said, as he regarded the wretch before him," but perhaps it is just as well. He will sleep for hours and will be sober when he does awaken. "The woman did not answer. She leaned against the window, gazing blindly into the darkness. She was not crying, yet great, dry sobs shook her frame. Delicate, almost fragile she was, yet the very weight of the world seemed to lie on those shapely shoulders. Stanley's heart ached for her. All he could do to help seemed so unavailing. He drew her from the window and with gentle touch made her comfortable in the chair so lately occupied by her husband, and also held a soothing potion to her lips. Poor, tired nerves, trembling with the weight of another's sin!

"Drink this, please, Mrs. Bennett," he begged. "It will do you good, I'm sure."

She tried to swallow the contents of the cup obediently, but the anguish of her heart seemed to reflect in the muscles of her throat, and she almost choked. However, a moment later a pair of dark eyes met his bravely.

"We must all bear our burdens, must we not?" she asked, smiling.

Stanley knew that smile- knew it to be the bravest thing in all the world. He could almost see the slight shoulders square themselves to carry their enormous burden, and knew that inasmuch as it were possible that burden would be carried alone. Without once more referring to the drunkard who slept so near them, filling the room with the stench of his foul breathing, she turned to the bed where the sick child lay. "I can see she has improved," she said, laying her hand lovingly on the mass of brown curls. "Oh, I prayed that the Lord would let her live until you came. I just felt that if she were alive when you came, you would be able to save her."

Stanley's eyes rested on the woman beside him questioningly. The words, "I prayed that the Lord would let her live until you came," burned into his brain. Everywhere, he reflected, he was confronted with one thought- the existence of God and his interest in the everyday affairs of life. No, it could not be possible. Even if such a great powerful being did exist among all the atoms of life, could the creeds and sorrows of one like the little mistress of this home, or the unconscious child with whom he had been working, he considered of sufficient importance to warrant the answering of such a prayer? Surely not. If such a being did exist, he would be too great to notice the little things of life. Yet- the face of Alfred Stewart suddenly came before him, and he seemed again to hear the words: "Don't worry about it. Some day that question will settle itself, and you will know there is a God." In his heart he wished the time had come, wished the question were settled.

"Don't you think, doctor," Mrs. Bennett said, "that you could leave instructions with me now, and get some rest? You have had a trying night."

So it was arranged. Stanley paused in the doorway to give her some final instructions.

"You will need to watch her very, very closely," he said. "Do not leave her bedside unless it is absolutely necessary. I will have your breakfast sent in. It might be dangerous for you to leave her to prepare the meal yourself."

This was said in such a matter-of-fact tone that no suspicions were raised in the mind of the woman. She did not guess that he knew a preparation of the meal would be impossible.

"Thank you, doctor," was all she said, and he was gone, leaving her alone once more with the problems of her life.

She arose again and walked to the window, looking out into the shadows which had begun to lighten with the first faint promise of approaching day. She could see just the dim outlines of the trees which fringed the lake. The peace and quiet of the night lay like a benediction over the forest. From afar came the call of some lord of the barnyard, announcing to his feathered companions that the day was near at hand. From farther still, mellowed by the distance, his call was answered by another of his kind. Then all was still. The world was at rest, and something of the peace of it seemed to steal into her mother's heart as she took up once more her vigil at the bedside of her child. Did she feel that as the light of a new day chased away the shadows of a deep, dark night, so would a new sun arise in her own life to dispel the shadows of the great black night through which she had scarcely been able to live? Perhaps not, yet something of the assurance with which night yields to the coming day gave her an indescribable comfort, a feeling that although the brightness of our lives may be obscured at times, life cannot be all night. Sunshine and shadow must combine, that life and the forming of character may be whole and complete, wanting nothing.

CHAPTER 10

STANLEY SENDS IN A BREAKFAST

Stanley did not ride home immediately upon leaving the Bennett house with its burden of debauchery and its threat of death. The stench of whisky-laden breath, combined with the odor of fever, was in his nostrils. Spider picked her way cautiously among the trees to the highway where Stanley headed for the open country. It was still quite dark, but the early morning air was charged with vitality, and the man inhaled it deeply and gratefully. He felt he would like to ride- ride far and forget – forget the death which invaded that home, not the physical death with which he had battled, but the greater living death which seemed more terrible because he could not fight it.

He galloped on to where the road touched the edge of the lake, then, turning at right angles, headed toward the hills. He had no definite goal in view, only a desire to once more adjust himself mentally to the world.

Day was near at hand. The sky in the east had taken on a lighter hue, and the trees of the forest were plainly visible. Stanley could hear the chirp of the birds among the branches as they bestirred themselves into action. But his thoughts were not with these. The picture of the lonely little mother in the scantily furnished cabin oppressed him. Had she been a widow with even the memory of a faithful husband to help her, it would not have been so bad. But this- this worse than death, which in his mind stretched on throughout all the years before her and from which there seemed no relief! He could see again the slight, almost girlish shoulders square themselves to carry their burden, and he knew they would never shirk; knew that she would grow old, old before her time, and finally when physically she was able to bear no more, she would die, and death would be a blessing. Death- what then? In his own mind he always had said oblivion. Mechanically he turned his horse's head once more, following a less-used but well-defined road leading directly into the forest. Oblivion- well, oblivion would be better than such a life, but somehow it did not seem satisfactory. How dreadful it is, he thought, that if this life is all, it should be so wasted.

By this time Stanley had passed under the first arch of the trees and found himself in the denser part of the forest. The trees lining the narrow roadway reached forth friendly branches to each other, forming a perfect canopy of leaves above him. From among the shadows on each side he could catch glimpses of moss beds from which tiny flowers peeped cautiously. The cool fragrance of growing things filled the atmosphere with their own vitality, and Spider lifting her head in appreciation, quickened her pace.

Contradicting his line of thought, Stanley found himself repeating the words of Prentice: "It cannot be that our life is a mere bubble cast up by eternity to float a moment on its waves and then sink into nothingness. Else why is it that the glorious aspirations which leap like angels from the temples of our hearts are forever unsatisfied?"

"He is right about the 'unsatisfied' part," Stanley thought. "Life at its best is just about an even mixture of sorrow and happiness, and at its worst – whew!" From sudden energy of thought Stanley cut the head from a wayside flower with his riding whip: a shower of dewdrops was the result. "Well, if this life is all, it's hell for some people sure, and it doesn't seem fair, either, when it's not their fault. Now if, as they try to tell us in church, there could be another life where it all could be fixed up, it would be fine. It does sound like a fairy tale but it would be fine."

Reaching up, Stanley pulled a leaf from the branch of a tree which stretched out over his head. "Of course," he thought, "religion is founded on the theory that there is a spirit in man which is severed from the body at death, but which must live throughout eternity."

Stanley had never believed that theory, at least had never convinced himself of its truthfulness. "It's a fine theory," he continued in thought, "but I can't make it work out. What do you think about it, Spider? If a man has a spirit, why haven't you? Why is it reasonable to believe that I have a spirit and that you haven't? You have as much life as I have .I wish I knew. I certainly wish I knew."

Over Stanley's face there passed the sudden wistful look which always came when he thought on this subject. In his mind he could hear once more Alfred Stewart's voice as he said: "In my Father's house are many mansions." What a comfort it would be to believe. What a comfort!

Spider, cantering easily among the trees, suddenly emerged from the forest where the road dipped and crossed Turkey Creek just below the barn at Stanley's home. She stepped daintily to the edge and lowered her head to drink of its waters before she attempted to cross the ford. Stanley patted her neck affectionately as he leaned forward to loosen her rein.

The night had slipped away. The sun was up when he alighted wearily from his horse in the barnyard. Bill Lakeman had seen him coming and came to meet him with concern written plainly upon every feature of his kindly face. He did not need to ask the question. His son knew what he wanted to know.

"I can't say yet, father the child is dreadfully ill, but I think the greatest danger is past."

When Spider was made comfortable in her stall, Stanley walked beside his father to the house. His shoulders, usually carried erect, stooped slightly with the weight of the burden of others.

"Well, boy," Bill Lakeman said soothingly, "you have done your best, so don't worry. Life is short at best, and as it passes it teaches us some things. Among the things I have tried to learn is to do what is right so far as I am concerned and not to worry over the things which are too big for me."

“Yes, I know, father,” his son returned, “but that is not the worst of this case. If it were only a case of the sickness of the child, it would be like many other such cases which we must expect to handle.” Then he told his father of the brave little mother, of his midnight conversation with little Joey, the homecoming of the brute of a husband, the young wife’s fear, and later her splendid courage, of how he had found that there was nothing to eat in the house.

Bill Lakeman listened attentively, sympathetically, as the narrative continued. “It’s a burning shame,” he said, “A burning shame. But you have done your part, boy, and good will come of it. Of course there is more to do yet, but you have done all you could for the present. Remember this: you are not responsible for the evil there is in the world. Do all you can to eliminate it: beyond that don’t worry. Now have Sophronia give you something to eat and get to bed for some rest. I’ll see that you are called whenever you want to get up. And boy, rest easier with this thought; you are not responsible for the evil, but will do all in your power to allay suffering.”

Stanley thanked his father with a glance as he stepped through the cottage door into the kitchen. “I told her,” he continued the conversation, speaking to his father, “that I did not want her to leave the child to prepare breakfast and that I would have Aunt Sophronia take breakfast to them.”

Aunt Sophronia, who had also seen Stanley as he came, was already arranging a hearty meal on the table for him. She looked up immediately as she heard Stanley’s remark. Bill Lakeman conveyed to her in a very few words the need Stanley had just outlined to him.

“We’ll just make them think we eat powerfully big breakfasts up here, eh, Sophronia? You sit right down, boy, and eat your breakfast. Sophronia and I will attend to this.”

Aunt Sophronia had seemed to anticipate the young doctor’s needs. The breakfast she placed before him was appetizing and restful. Stanley laughed as he viewed a great plate of steaming cream toast. “I think that is literally true, father. Look at this plate. Enough for three men.”

Aunt Sophronia only smiled. She well knew that, according to his own estimate, much more than one man’s share would disappear before he left the table.

“Where’s Stewart?” Stanley asked, as he removed the contents of a coddled egg from its shell. “In bed yet?”

“No,” his father answered. “He wanted to try walking, so he is out for a little exercise. He probably will not go far. Those crutches do not make walking easy.”

“I thought for awhile last night,” Stanley said, “that he would be needed more on my case than I myself.”

“I have always said,” Bill Lakeman returned, “that when I died I did not want any hypocritical preacher saying any words over my grave, but I wouldn’t mind a few words from a chap like Stewart. He means what she says at any rate.”

“Yes,” his son answered. “I can imagine his being quite eloquent, too.”

“Any really sincere man probably will be eloquent. Sincerity is the foundation upon which all true eloquence must be based,” Bill Lakeman returned with emphasis. “There is in the world that which is sometimes mistaken for eloquence, but it is empty. It is like some copies I have seen of masterpieces in painting. It lacks all that makes it worthwhile.”

Aunt Sophronia had brought from the pantry a large market basket in which she had already spread a snowy cloth as a preface for what was to follow. Stanley watched her approvingly as he saw a bottle of rich, sweet milk follow a big, fluffy load of white bread, several slices of home-cured ham, a cake of butter, and a bag of coffee. Evidently not satisfied, the good old lady disappeared once more within the pantry. Stanley choked back a laugh, which came near being fatal to a cup of coffee he held to his lips, for no sooner was his aunt’s back turned than he saw his father surreptitiously lift the cover and slip in a glass of his own favorite jelly. Stanley knew that particular brand of jelly was scarce and that the giving of one of the few remaining glasses meant a real sacrifice to his father. He also knew that had Aunt Sophronia known she would have substituted another in its stead. So he kept his own counsel as his aunt continued to put into the basket delicacy after delicacy of which only she could have thought.

A few moments later Bill Lakeman had horse and buggy waiting for her to start on her errand. He nodded approvingly as he saw the evident pleasure with which she went. As he turned to enter the house once more he met Alfred coming up the path on his return from his morning walk.

“Well, sir,” Bill Lakeman greeted him, “how do those crutches behave? A bit awkward, are they? It takes practice to do anything in this world, even to walk with crutches. A pair of good legs is better. Yes, they are better. “I remember once when I was a youngster, “ he went on, laughing, “I had an ambition to walk on crutches, so I stole out with a pair my father had and tried them. The result was that I slipped and fell and then had to use them in real earnest. It ceased to be fun immediately. The next day I cried because my mother made me use them. Yes, “ he went on quietly, “My viewpoint seemed to have changed. It seemed to have changed.”

Reaching up he pulled a bunch of clematis bloom which hung above their path. “How did you enjoy your walk?” he added. “Splendidly, sir, splendidly,” Alfred answered. “I walked down to that old tree with its branches stretched

over the creek. I'm afraid I am not really grown up. I sat there and listened to the water running over the rocks and imagined it was saying many things. What do you think I found there?" He held up a flower of peculiar model. "A lady's slipper- the first I have seen for years."

"They are rare," Bill Lakeman said. "Two or three during the summer are all we ever see. Just across the creek on that hill, up among the trees, is a great bed of bluebells; around that little knoll to the right the hill is covered with daisies. Just across the meadow there is a bed of yellow pansies. I suppose I should plow them up and use the land, but the old place scarcely would seem the same without them."

By the time they reached the kitchen door Stanley had risen from the table. His eyes brightened as they rested on Alfred Stewart. "How does the foot feel?" he asked in greeting.

"I haven't tried, but I think I could almost walk on it," Alfred returned.

"Indeed you could not," Stanley said with mock severity. "I don't want to hear of your trying it."

"Remember, father," he said as he left them, "don't let me sleep too long. I must get back to the Bennett child this afternoon. Besides, I must call on Mrs. Wenegar today." This with a wry face.

Bill Lakeman laughed heartily. "Mrs. Wenegar," he volunteered the information to Alfred, "is a would-be invalid. She seems to think that the best way to break into the inner circles of society is by way of the surgeon's knife. She is one of Stanley's best paying patients, but I think he will lose her unless he performs some kind of an operation. He says he'll never do it. Besides he knows full well that if there were something really wrong with her and he should effect a cure, she would never forgive him. She would lose her only topic of conversation. It takes all kinds of people to make a world, and I am inclined to think a physician just about runs into all of them."

"Yes," Alfred said, "and I think a preacher comes in contact with various specimens also."

"I guess you are right," Bill Lakeman laughed back. "However, it always has been one of my pet theories that preachers themselves contribute very largely to that same irregularity."

It was now Alfred's turn to make a wry face, to the great amusement of Bill Lakeman.

"Shall we call a truce?" Alfred asked, with a good-natured sparkle in his eye.

"Perhaps we had better," his companion returned. "I really must get to work myself."

"And I think I must get to studying," Alfred said. "Perhaps if I do not you will get the best of me in our study tonight, and I don't think I would like that."

Bill Lakeman's face became serious. "I am almost beginning to think there is no danger of that," he said as he went out.

When he was gone and Alfred was left alone, he knelt before God and implored him long and earnestly to assist him in bringing about the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER 11

"THEN OPENED HE THE SCRIPTURES"

As the sun once more declined toward the horizon, Alfred and Stanley came upon Aunt Sophronia arranging tables and chairs beneath the honeysuckle where Alfred had talked to them the evening before.

"Ah, this will be fine," Alfred said. "It will be so much more pleasant to study here than indoors."

"Yes," Stanley bantered slightly, "and there will be another big advantage. The preacher in the case can't keep us too long, for it will get so dark we can't see to read and he will have to quit. I find all preachers to be more or less like Dunbar's colored preacher was at the spelling match. He couldn't spell condensation."

Aunt Sophronia gave Alfred one of her rare smiles and disappeared into the house, returning a moment later with a large lamp in each hand. She placed one on each table. Stanley threw up his hands with a gesture of despair.

"It's no use," he said. "You've got Aunt Sophronia on your side."

"Well," he continued with mock gravity, "I suppose I had better bring my Bible and prepare for a theological whipping."

"I'm afraid," Alfred returned, "that you never will recognize my theology as such in the light of modern theology."

Stanley groaned. "I'm beginning to see that I'll never be able to survive such an experience."

The young man disappeared indoors as Bill Lakeman came around the corner of the house lugging a great family Bible that seemed to be all he could carry.

"Bill Lakeman!" Aunt Sophronia exclaimed. "What are you bringing that Bible out here for? A body would think you was hard up for Bibles."

"Never you mind, Sophronia," Bill Lakeman answered, as he dropped the book with a thud on the table nearest

him. "I may need a Bible I can find things in tonight. I have marked this one a wee bit."

Stanley and Alfred emerged once more from the house, Bibles in hand, just as Jennie Burnside galloped up to the gate and jumped from her horse. Jennie cast her eyes approvingly over the scene. The quiet peace of the old house with its ivy vines always filled her with a vague longing, a dreamy realization that in her life there was something lacking: a strange something which the unpretentious cottage seemed to satisfy. The chairs and the tables with their snow white coverings, now grouped artistically beneath the honeysuckle, only intensified this feeling, because although she did not realize it, they increased the atmosphere of home which clung to the place.

"I see we are all ready," she said, when she had exchanged greetings with those present. Do you know I have been in a perfect fever of excitement today? I could scarcely wait for this study hour to come. There is so much I really want to know."

"I'm like Jennie," Bill Lakeman said. "I am anxious to hear more of this man's strange doctrine. If he can hold out as well as he started, it promises to be interesting. We are all here, Mr. Stewart; suppose we start in if you are ready."

"I am quite ready," Alfred answered.

He hobbled to the table nearest him and stood for a moment by the side of a chair. Stanley seated himself on the opposite side of the same table. Bill Lakeman chose a chair nearest the spot where he had deposited the big Bible. Aunt Sophronia took a chair across the table from him. Jennie, throwing her riding whip and gloves on the grass behind her, seated herself in the remaining chair, beside Aunt Sophronia.

When each had raised an expectant face to him, Alfred said:

"I do not feel like entering upon anything of this kind without first asking the help of God. Would you mind, Mr. Lakeman, if we should have prayer?"

"No, indeed! Just fire ahead, sir," Bill Lakeman said, not irreverently. "I may not see where praying accomplishes anything myself, but I am perfectly willing to allow any man the privilege of praying if he wants to."

Alfred knelt beside his chair, the others bowing or kneeling as they felt inclined. Stanley did neither. He watched Alfred's face curiously, studiously. It was quite evident that prayer was a mystery to him.

The prayer was short and earnest. No effort was made on the part of the young minister to impress his hearers. There was no ministerial intonation of voice. Indeed, distinguishing features of the prayer were its utter lack of pretense and the earnestness with which it was offered.

When the prayer was ended, Alfred looked into the faces of his newly acquired friends, each of whom had an open bible before him.

"Friends," he said, "I believe we have come together tonight that we might acquire truth. Larson has said, 'The acquirement of truth is the highest object any man can have.' I think if we truly desire to know the truth we should open our minds to receive truth; knowing this, that we cannot judge whether a thing be true until we have taken it into our minds and carefully examined it from all points of view. So I ask you to consider carefully whatever may come before us. Not too critically, because a hypercritical mind is always half closed to truth; but logically examine the thoughts presented and if they are the truth, they will be able to stand any test you may be able to bring to bear upon them.

"I do not ask or desire that you accept anything I may say as the truth unless it will stand the test of your own reason. That is the only way any truth can be a truth to you. The Lord has said, 'Come now, and let us reason together.' That is what I desire for tonight, that we reason together.

"The matter we are about to take up means a great deal to me, more than anything else in life. I believe it means a great deal to you. Indeed I think it is the most important question in the life of any man or woman, because it deals with the question of ourselves and our destiny.

"One of two things is true; we are either nothing; that is, after our fitful little spell of life is over we sink back again into the oblivion from which we came, in which case the very life we possess is only the result of certain combinations of chemical or physical elements and forces, which, spending themselves, are lost again in inaction; or, we are intelligent spiritual beings.

"If the former be true, we are then mentally as well as physically a combination of many distinct parts and forces. I do not believe that, for from birth to death we never lost our feeling of mental unity. This awareness we feel always, separate and apart from the diversified organization of our physical bodies. Always we feel our identity. One identity, not many. So I believe we are spiritual beings, clothed upon by a physical body. If that be true, then it is easy to believe that when the physical body sinks into the inactivity of death, the spirit of man- by that I mean the thinking principle, the personality, the real man, that thing we refer to when we say, 'I' simply withdraws from that which through permanent inaction is no longer useful to it, and returns once more to its spiritual plane. Now, taking this as our starting point, the question before us is, what is the destiny of that spirit? What are its experiences after leaving this life, and what did the mission of Christ accomplish for it? You will notice that that is a continuation of

the subject we had under consideration last night.”

Alfred paused and began turning the leaves of his Bible. Stanley looked at him thoughtfully a moment, then said: “Before you go further, I want to ask you a question. Am I to understand you to mean that the thing which you term ‘spirit’ is something separate and distinct from the mind of man?”

“Not that, exactly,” Alfred answered. “However, I think we have a tendency to confuse the brain and its action with the mind. In my estimation mind and spirit are the same thing. But the action of the brain may be quite another.”

“Then you do not think the brain creates thought and the sum total of our thoughts is our mind?”

“No,” Alfred answered, “I do not. The brain is no more capable of creating thought than an organ is of creating music. The brain can be acted upon or can transfer intelligence to the mind, but is not capable of creating that which is greater than itself- the mind.”

Stanley looked doubtfully up at the flowers hanging in a cluster above his head. “I don’t just know what some of the teachers in the medical schools would say to that theory,” he said.

“Yet some of the most noted of your profession hold this view.” Alfred answered. “Tudeman tells us of a case which came under his observation. A lunatic was insane on one side of his head, but observed and corrected his own insanity. What observed and corrected this insanity? Certainly the man himself, not half of him.”

Stanley and Bill Lakeman seemed to be thinking the matter over quite seriously, but neither ventured to question further along that line. When Alfred was satisfied that no more would be asked, he turned his attention to the matter before them.

“Let me see,” he said reflectively: “I think last night we were considering the question of rewards. We had taken the position that in the next world there would be many different degrees of reward, according to the work we had accomplished in this life. Did we succeed in making that much clear?”

“I think you substantiated your position by the Bible. At least I thought so last night,” Stanley said. “But you have raised several questions in my mind. Now if the Bible be true, it ought not seriously to contradict itself. How can every man be raised in his own order, as you said last night when, according to the Bible itself, the vast majority of them already must be in hell? I almost came to the conclusion from your talk last night that you believed God would not send the unbeliever to hell. Now I have looked up several passages of Scripture today myself, and I can’t seem to harmonize them with your position.”

Bill Lakeman nodded approval of his son’s question. Evidently the same line of thought had been in his own mind. Over Jennie’s face there passed a shadow, a vague fear that the comfort she had received last night might be fleeting.

“I think in that case,” Alfred said, “we had better examine those passages which you say you cannot harmonize, for we can safely take the position that truth will harmonize with itself. Only half truths and falsehoods fail to harmonize. Before we do that, however, let us summarize our position as taken last night. We took the position, first, that every man would be resurrected; second, that every man would come forth in his own order to receive his own degree of glory; third, that there exists a reward for the disciples of Christ separate and apart from the reward which will be given those who do not accept him.”

“I like that theory,” Bill Lakeman said, “because it is so sensible and adequate. I can see that even the part allowing the highest reward to go to those who are the disciples of Christ is just. You, if you spend your life serving Christ, will deserve more at his hands than I would who have gone through life a skeptic, doubting him and his words; yes, and even sometimes criticizing. But what are you going to do about that class of Christ’s disciples who use their religion only as a coat of respectability to cover up about as much meanness as respectability can cover, with a little extra thrown in? What are you going to do about them?”

Alfred smiled comprehendingly. “You will notice,” he rejoined, that I said, “Those who apply the law of Christ in their lives.” I am not even trying to do anything with the class you mentioned. I am inclined to think that Christ will do all to them that is necessary when the time comes. He has told us that, ‘Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ He tells us plainly it is he that ‘doeth the will of the Father,’ that shall enter there. The others, I am afraid, must settle back to their own level, and that at times may be quite low. Now, let us see what we can do with the lack of harmony which Stanley has discovered. Let us hear your passages of Scripture, Stanley. We will all turn to them while you read.”

“There is a place in the ninth chapter of Mark which reads like this, Stanley said; “ ‘If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’ Stanley paused and looked at Alfred with an air of finality which seemed to say, “Now, you can’t get away from that.”

“Yes, and I’ve got another one to add to that, Bill Lakeman broke in, flapping the leaves of his big Bible noisily. When he found the place he was hunting, heavy red lines around the verses proclaiming that they had been

read and considered before. "Matthew 13:41; 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'" "

When his father paused, Stanley said: "Now, I can't see how, with all those people tied up in everlasting fire, you are going to give them the rewards you were talking about last night."

Jennie's face was troubled. Bill Lakeman watched Alfred narrowly; he felt that much depended on his answer. Alfred's face was serious, but his eyes twinkled.

"Do you know," he said, "that reminds me of an experience I once had when I was a child; one Christmas my grandmother gave me a game. It was all the states of the union cut from cardboard. When I put them together properly, I had a complete map of the United States. When I put them together improperly the result was confusion. One thing I always tried to do, until I learned better, was to put the state of Texas up where New York should have been, but it never seemed to fit. Because it was big and glaring I always wanted to use it first. But I never could get a complete map of the United States that way. Now we have just such a task before us tonight. There is a beautiful plan of salvation in the Scriptures; but, like my map, it needs placing together, and we will need to be very careful or we may not succeed in bringing such pieces together as shall make at last a perfect whole."

"I suppose you mean by that," Bill Lakeman said, the smile once more returning to his kind old face, "that Stanley and I have picked out the Texas. Well, have it your own way. We're ready to hear what your New York is."

"We're not even ready for New York yet," Alfred laughed back. Then seriously; "Last night in our discussion we looked at only one side of the question before us. We talked of rewards. I think it is very evident to any Bible student that there exists also punishment. Perhaps the words 'reward' and 'punishment' hardly express what we wish to say, for after all, it is a deeper question than that. It all centers around two things; The mission of Christ and the work of the Devil. So if we get anything out of this question we must go further back. We must study those two things around which it all revolves."

Bill Lakeman looked at Alfred, a serious, half-wistful look on his face. "That is something I never could see much in: he said. "It has always looked to me as though the mission of Christ which we hear so much about is a sort of child's play. Don't misunderstand me. I want to believe in it, but there seems so little to believe in."

"I can understand your feeling," Alfred answered gently, "for I have felt the same way myself in the past. But, oh!" he continued, his voice vibrating with emotion, "it is because we do not understand. The work which Christ has undertaken is the biggest thing in all the history of the universe, and when it is accomplished, will be the most complete."

"Then you do not think his work has been accomplished yet?" Stanley asked.

"No!" Alfred answered earnestly. "We have scarcely seen the beginning of that work."

For a moment dead stillness reigned. then Alfred continued more gently:

'I am inclined to think we never will be able in this world to comprehend fully the true significance of the statement, 'He has trodden the wine press alone.'

"The Bible gives us this picture," he went on, his voice losing its dreamy quality. "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils' (Luke 11:21, 22)

"These verses give us a hint of what the mission of Christ is. He gives us to understand that there is a strange man keeping a house, but that a stronger than he shall come and take away all his armor and divide his goods.

"Now, Mr. Lakeman, will you read 1 John 3:8 and tell us from there why Christ was manifested?"

Bill Lakeman read: "'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.' Destroy the works of the Devil?" Bill Lakeman repeated questioningly. "Well, he'll have a life-sized job."

"Yes," Alfred answered, smiling at the other's quaintness "I think it will take a 'stronger than he' all right to do the work. Now I think the thing for us to do is to find what the works of the Devil are which we have just read Christ came to destroy. Now I think we can agree that sin is one of the things which the Devil brought into the world. Miss Lakeman, from James 1:15 what do we learn sin will cause?"

Aunt Sophronia lifted her eyes but made no move to turn the leaves of her Bible. "Death," she answered.

"Very well," said Alfred. "Now we will see who had the power over death. Stanley, will you tell us from Hebrews 2:14?"

After a patient effort Stanley found the place and read: "'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil. ' "

"I never thought of the Devil as being the one who had power of death," Jennie said. "I think I have always blamed God for death."

"I think you were wrong in that," Alfred said. "God is the great life-giver, the up-builder in all things, not the destroyer. Now if it is the Devil who has the power of death, how many will he bring death upon?"

"All men," Stanley answered emphatically.

"That is true," Alfred returned. "Now, Miss Burnside, tell us from 1 Corinthians 15:22 what Christ will do to all men."

Jennie studied the verse carefully a moment, and then said brightly: "Make them alive! "

"I think we can take the position safely," Alfred went on, "that death is twofold. Please note this carefully: First, spiritual: that is, separation from God. Second, physical: separation of the body and spirit. Those two things cover the death which Satan brought into the world. Consequently those two things cover the death which Christ undertook to overcome."

"That's a strange thought," Bill Lakeman said. "Why, that would lead us to – but never mind- I'll ask you that later. Yes, I'll ask you that later." The old man nodded his head with apparent self-satisfaction.

"I think I know what your question is, Mr. Lakeman," Alfred answered, "and I will answer when you see fit to ask it. But to return to our subject . We learn from 11 Timothy 2:26 that those who do not accept the teachings of Christ are taken captive by Satan. From Psalms 9:17 and 55:15 we also learn that those captives of Satan are taken down to hell. Now we have learned from these verses just what Stanley was saying to us a few moments ago, that many people have been confined in hell. Now, let us try to learn something more about this place where these captives are confined. Stanley, will you read Isaiah 5:14? The first part of the verse will do."

Stanley read: " 'Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure.' "

"If I were a debater, " Bill Lakeman spoke up, "I'd say, Mr. Stewart, that you were talking on the wrong side of the question."

"Perhaps I am," agreed Alfred, "but I think that in our search for truth nothing which contains truth can be on the wrong side of the question. These verses show something of the extent to which Satan succeeds in taking captive the souls of men. 'Hell hath opened her mouth without measure.' Now we have another name for hell, given in Isaiah 24:22 Miss Burnside, will you read it?"

" 'And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit.' "

"We will find the same term used in Job 33:18, 24, 28; also in Psalms 28:1, while the thirty-second chapter of Ezekiel shows conclusively that hell and the pit are the same place. Now, Stanley, will you read all of Isaiah 24:22?"

" 'And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.' "

"Now I think we have established the fact, that first, the Devil brought sin into the world and through sin gained the power over death; second, that through sin and death the souls of vast multitudes are confined in hell, the pit, or the prison, whichever term you care to use. These, therefore, are the works of the Devil.

"I think we have shown also that the purpose for which Christ came into the world was to destroy the works of the Devil; sin, death, and the resultant captivity of souls. Now, Mr. Lakeman, will you read 1 Timothy 4:10?"

Bill Lakeman turned and read; " 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.' "

When he had finished he raised his head and looked at Alfred keenly.

"Are you sure, Mr. Stewart, that this verse isn't another Texas? It looks to me like a misfit. Here you've got a lot of people already damned and in hell. Now, how do you figure Christ is going to be the Savior of all men?" Alfred's vision wandered away from the little group down to where the fireflies were beginning to play along the creek.

"It does look like a predicament, doesn't it?" he asked. "Now, let us get your question straight. Mr. Lakeman has just read from the Bible that Christ is to be the Savior of all men. Now he wants to know, if I understand him correctly, how Christ can be the Savior of all men when the Devil already has captured the souls of a vast majority of them; for, comparatively speaking, Christ has been accepted as the Savior of the world by a very small portion of the inhabitants of the earth, a surprisingly small proportion. That is your question, is it not, Mr. Lakeman?"

Bill Lakeman nodded.

"Now, let us look for the answer. Stanley, will you read once more from Isaiah 24:22?"

Stanley read: " 'And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited.' "

"Eh! What's that?" This from Bill Lakeman. "Read that again."

When Stanley had read once more the old man asked: "Do you mean to tell us that they will receive visitors in hell?"

"I can answer that question as well as a preacher," Stanley spoke up before Alfred had time to reply. "I heard one once tell how every thousand years Satan would walk around hell and open a red-hot door and tell the man,

woman, or child shut up inside that the one thousand years just passed was only a moment out of the eternity through which they would have to stay there.”

Stanley’s face was quite serious- around the mouth there had suddenly appeared set, hard lines. The young preacher’s laugh rang out as his eyes rested accusingly on his friend.

“Oh, Stanley, Stanley!” he said. “You almost had me thinking I was hearing a big evangelist preaching a sermon on hell. Now, listen.” The young preacher suddenly leaned forward and let his fist fall on the table in front of Stanley. “You tell that preacher that I want to know where he finds his records of these periodical visits of Satan in hell, outside of his own imagination. I want to know when a man’s walking around in his own house is called a visit. I think your preacher will have to look somewhere else for his visitor, I believe we can give a better answer ourselves. Do you remember the verses we used in the beginning of our study? “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted and divided his spoils.” Now let us not forget that thought. The strong man’s goods are safe until a stronger man comes. Now let us look a little further. Let us see if we can find some of the work to be accomplished by this strange visitor in hell; then, perhaps we can decide whether it is the ‘stronger than he’ or not. Now let us summarize ; We have learned that Satan truly has captured many souls and has brought them down to hell, the pit, and has shut them up in prison, but that after many days they shall be visited. Now what is the object of that visit, and what is to be accomplished by it?”

“Well, if it is not Satan who visits them, who does? That’s the question which is bothering me,” Stanley said.

“That’s the question which will bother us all pretty soon,” Alfred replied.

“It looks to me, young man, as if you are getting into mighty deep water,” Bill Lakeman said. “I’ve talked to lots of preachers, but I’ll declare, you’ve got me curious.”

“It’s clear as far as we have gone, isn’t it?” Alfred asked anxiously. “Those things are all in the Bible.”

“Yes, yes; that’s it. They are all in the Bible, but it looks to me like a great big muddle.”

“Well, let’s see. I think we can straighten out the muddle,” Alfred said. “Miss Lakeman, from Zechariah 9:11, will you tell us what is to happen to the prisoners?”

Miss Lakeman read: “ ‘As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.’ “

“Do you mean, “ Stanley asked, “that those prisoners can ever come out of hell?”

“Do you remember,” Alfred asked in return, “what happens to the strong man’s goods when a ‘stronger than he shall come?”

Bill Lakeman rubbed his head and looked thoughtfully at the book before him. Finally, without venturing an opinion, he simply drew pencil marks around the verse and said: “Well, let’s hear what you’ve got next.”

“All right, Stanley, read Isaiah 61:1.”

“ ‘He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.’ “

Bill Lakeman began to show signs of excitement, but he said nothing, merely marking again around the verse in his Bible.

“Now, Miss Burnside, Isaiah 49:9.”

“ ‘That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.’ “

“Now, Mr. Lakeman, Isaiah 42:7.”

The old man read, but his voice shook as he did so: “ ‘To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.’

“Man!” he said as though he could contain himself no longer. ‘Do you know what you are teaching us? You are teaching us that Satan can’t keep the people in hell even after he gets them there.’

“I know it,” Alfred answered, his voice taking on the soft, almost caressing quality he always used when deeply stirred. “I’m teaching you what happens when a ‘stronger than he’ shall come.”

“What I want to know is, Who is going to do all this?” Stanley broke in. “How’s all this going to be brought about after Satan gets them all in hell?”

“The Prophet Ezekiel tells us,” Alfred answered him, “that the strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell, with them that help him.”

“ ‘The strong among the mighty.’ Well, that doesn’t tell us who it is,”

Stanley persisted.

“Turn to Psalm: 24:7,8. That may help us. Miss Burnside, read it, please.”

“ ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in . Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.’ “

“Do you mean to say,” Jennie asked, “that it is the Lord who is to speak out of the midst of hell? Surely, Christ

never went to hell.”

“He is the strong among the mighty. Isaiah speaks of him as the mighty to save. The Bible tells us he is to speak out of the midst of hell. It also tells us, in Ephesians 4:9, that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.”

“But he did no sin. Why should he be there?” Jennie was evidently troubled.

“Let’s look for the answer in the Bible,” Alfred said. “Stanley, will you turn to 1 Peter 3:18,19 and read?”

“ ‘For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.’ ”

“Now if we will read also verse 20, “ Alfred continued, “we will find that these spirits to whom Christ went to preach were those who had refused to believe when Noah preached to them before the flood. They had been in the prison house many years, but after ‘many days’ they were visited. Christ himself went to preach to them. Remember the words, ‘ He hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives.’ Paul tells us that ‘he led captivity captive’ ; 1 Peter 4:6 says, ‘For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead.’ “

Night was advancing from over the hill; the shadows along the creek were deepening. A lone cricket back of the barn sent out his shrill call on the evening air. The frogs in the pond raised a melody in chorus, but these things went unnoticed.

“An, no, the speaker continued, the light of a dreamer in his eyes, “the strong among the mighty has come. He that liveth and was dead, but is alive forevermore, and has the keys of death and hell, will open the prison house and say to the prisoners, ‘ Go forth.’ Truly it was a mission worthy of the Son of God.”

Bill Lakeman jumped from his chair, overturning it in his agitation. “God!” he ejaculated, “so that is the mission of Christ, and I have dared to speak lightly of it: dared to criticize it; dared to call it a failure; dared to laugh at religion. My God! Can he ever forgive me?”

Tears flowed freely down the old man’s face. He turned and grasped Alfred’s hand in his own.

“Go on, my boy; go tell that message to the world. Lord, how they need it! How we all need it! Don’t let them go down to their graves as Mrs. Burnside has gone, and as I almost have gone, with hardness in their hearts against God and Christ, because we thought they were trying to damn humanity instead of save them. God in heaven!” The old man lifted his hands above his head appealingly. “How could I ever have been so blind?”

“Mr. Lakeman, “ Alfred said, his own voice shaking with emotion, “you did not criticize Christ’s work. You only criticized what you thought was Christ’s work; what the religious world told you was Christ’s work.”

“Ah, I know,” the old man said more calmly, half sadly, “but there was the Bible. Why couldn’t I read it myself? Why couldn’t I see?”

“You simply put the map together wrong,” Alfred answered.

“Yes, yes, I suppose so. But I can’t see why I never saw it before.”

Bill Lakeman had not been the only one deeply moved by the revelations of the hour. Jennie had slipped away when he began speaking, fearing that Alfred would see the tears that would come. They were happy tears now, tears that seemed to wash away the burden of years.

“Tell Mr. Stewart I will come again tomorrow night,” she said to Stanley as she slipped past him. He endeavored to follow her to the gate and assist her to mount, but she was too quick for him and was in the saddle and away before he reached the gate.

Stanley did not return to the house at once, but stood leaning against the gate as he gazed out across the valley where many fireflies frolicked in the darkness.

“Who would have believed that the Bible taught that?” he said to himself. “George! it was great. I’m like father; I always thought there wasn’t much to the mission of Christ, but it is wonderful . In the face of all that, I can’t doubt God. I don’t want to doubt him.”

CHAPTER 12

THE OLD TREE HEARS STRANGE THINGS

When Stanley returned to the house Alfred and his father had disappeared. Aunt Sophronia was removing chairs and tables. Stanley sat down on the edge of the porch and pulled a bunch of ivy leaves from the vine beside him.

“Well, Aunt Sophronia, what did you think of it?” he asked .

His aunt stopped with a chair poised in each hand. Stanley reached out and took them from her. “I’ll take these in,”

he said.

“Well, I believed it,” she answered. “I always knew there would be some way. I knew the Devil’d never get all those people. Only I didn’t know how to prove it from the Bible as he does.”

The old lady turned to pick up the last table. “I’ll bring that in, too,” Stanley called back as he disappeared within. After placing things at rights once more in the house, he strolled off through the evening shadows, down the path which led to the grove. It was quite dark among the trees, but Stanley knew the grove well and made his way with assurance. Not far from the edge of the grove stood an old oak tree. In times long past its low branches had been bent by a force now unknown, probably the falling of a larger tree, and now, as it had grown old, formed an excellent seat.

Had the daylight afforded, one could have seen a well-defined path leading directly to this tree, showing that from childhood it had been Stanley’s favorite spot of seclusion. Many of his childhood secrets were hidden away in the heart of the old tree. Often in the days long past, seated on the low limb now almost worn smooth, he had whittled away bare feet dangling, while his mind was busy with boyish cares; and the old tree had stood by in silent sympathy. Nor was this all. It had gathered other secrets of later years, not so much from his telling, but from the trouble or joy which was written on his face, or the shadow which lay in his eyes as he came to commune with himself.

The greatest problems of his life had been thought out here. It was seated in the old tree that he had planned his profession. It was here he often came to think when stubborn cases refused to yield to his treatment, and often had received the inspiration which brought to him professional success. And once he had come here with a glad light in his eyes and a song in his heart, when – but we are not telling that now.

So he came tonight to think on a new phase of life- the hereafter; not now as a skeptic, doubting such a condition, but rather as an inquirer, seeking to delve deeper into truths hitherto unknown.

Stanley looked out from among the trees where the last dim light of day faintly illumined the path leading to the grove. A figure was coming along the path, at first barely discernible in the darkness; but as it drew nearer the grove he saw by the unnatural gait that crutches were used in walking. Evidently Stanley was not the only one who wished to commune with himself in God’s own temple. However, Stanley had no further wish to commune with himself. He wanted much more to ask questions which were crowding upon in his mind.

The figure came nearer and paused at the spot where the path entered the grove, as if uncertain whether to enter the deeper shadows of the trees or to turn elsewhere.

“Stewart,” Stanley called. The figure stopped, evidently puzzled to tell where the voice came from.

“Oh, I’m here in the grove,” Stanley called, laughing at the other’s uncertainty. “Just follow the path; it’s perfectly level and clear. There’s no danger of falling, and it leads directly here.”

Alfred entered the woods and, as his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, could make out the outlines of the trees and the path which wound among them. As he came up to the old oak he could see Stanley seated on the low limb of the tree.

“I thought I was the only one,” Alfred said, “who could not think of going to bed without once more getting out among the trees, but I seem to have found a kindred spirit.”

‘I tell my troubles to this old tree,’ Stanley replied, as he moved over to make room for his friend.

“Am I to understand that you are in trouble tonight?” Alfred asked. “I don’t-“

‘No, you didn’t,’ Stanley broke in quickly. ‘Besides, you are not to take my statements too literally. I am not selfish enough to give this tree only my troubles. I think even a tree would die if we did nothing but tell it troubles all the time. No, I came out here to try to get straight in my mind what you were trying to teach us tonight.’

“Are you satisfied, so far as your study has taken you?” Alfred asked.

“Very much so,” the other answered. “Only it didn’t go far enough. I’m just full of questions.”

‘When you were in medical school,’ Alfred said, “I dare say you wanted to start right in the first year learning surgery.”

“Just about that bad,” Stanley admitted.

‘Let’s hear some of your questions.’ Alfred said, leaning his crutch on the limb beside him. “What’s bothering you most?”

“Well, probably it will be another Texas, as father says, but here goes. If it is, you can put it off for future reference. Now, if the unbelievers must go to hell, will they all burn in a lake of fire until Christ comes to take them out?”

“I do not understand it so,” Alfred returned. “I think the hell or prison house in which the captive spirits are confined between death and the resurrection is a place separate and apart from the hell spoken of as a lake of fire.”

“A separate place?” Stanley asked, puzzled.

“Yes,” Alfred answered. “We read in Revelation 20:13, speaking of the time of the judgment, ‘And death and

hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.' The next verse reads, now notice the wording, 'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.' We learn from this, two things. First, that death and hell will deliver up the dead that are in them, and second, that death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. So they could not be the same place, could they?"

"No," Stanley said thoughtfully; "hell could not be cast into itself. Not unless there were two hells,' Then after a moment's thought, "Do you regard this lake of fire as a literal lake of fire?"

"I don't know," Alfred answered. "That is one of the questions I cannot answer with any degree of certainty. Some who are considered good authority believe it to be a real, literal lake of fire,. Others consider it figurative. One thought which comes to me is this: first, literal fire, is of a material nature and acts upon material things. Now death and hell are not material things; they are conditions. We are also told that this lake of fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels. The Devil and at least a part of his angels are spiritual beings. Consequently they could not be acted upon by a material fire. So I cannot see how it could be a literal fire. However it is a condition I never want to test personally. I am willing to let the Devil and his angels test that condition alone, so far as I am concerned."

Stanley gazed intently out to where he knew the path ended. "Do you think," he asked, "that anyone beside the Devil and his angels will have to go there?"

"Yes," Alfred answered. "I'm afraid so. We read that the sons of perdition must go there- they who have not their names written in the Lamb's book of life."

"How, then, can Christ be the savior of all men, as you read from the Bible he would be?"

"Christ will have saved them once," Alfred answered, abstractedly pulling pieces of bark from the limb on which he sat. "He still will have been their Savior. That is where the sin against the Holy ghost comes in: in the passages of Scripture you read first. If, after they have accepted Christ and tasted the good gift of God, they then turn and deny, I can find no hope of a second salvation for them in the Scriptures."

Stanley pondered the question a moment, gazing into the blackness of the leaves above them. "I don't know," he said finally, "that they deserve one."

"You see, it is like this," Alfred went on. "The Lord has made us a promise that if any man will do the will of the father, he shall know of the doctrine. Now, when that promise has been verified and any man has been given, not a belief but a knowledge, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior: if, regardless of that knowledge, he deliberately denies the message the Holy Ghost has given him, he has no further claim on Christ and must go down with the Devil and his angels to whose level he has fallen. However I believe that number in the world's history has been very few." "Do you think," Stanley asked again, "that the spirits of those who are kept in that hell which you call the prison home suffer greatly before Christ comes to them with his message?"

"I can't tell you that," Alfred answered, "although I am inclined to think it will depend on the individual. There is a passage of Scripture which says, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.' Now, 'lowest hell' suggests that there must be other hells not quite as low. In other words, degrees of hell. I don't know how many of those degrees there may be, but I can easily believe that a very wicked man would suffer more than one not so wicked, can't you? The condemnation of his own conscience would make his punishment worse. "

"Yes, I would think so," his companion answered.

For a while no sound was heard among the trees of the grove. Each man was busy with his own thoughts . Presently Stanley leaned forward and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Do you know what you said to me about there being a God?" he asked. "You told me not to worry ; that question would settle itself. Well, that happened tonight while you were talking. I don't know how it came about, but all at once I seemed to know there is a God. I have tried in the past to figure him out, tried to account for him scientifically, but I just couldn't .

Tonight I felt within myself that it was true. I think father felt the same way."

"Of course you couldn't figure him out, " Alfred answered gently. "No man can. It is impossible to know God unless he reveals himself. After all, what is any knowledge but revelation? Take your knowledge of the existence of this tree, for instance. What is that knowledge but a revelation given you by the senses of sight and touch? This tree existed one hour ago, yet the knowledge of it had not yet been revealed to me through the means the Creator has designed for such revelation to reach me. I t was the same with you in regard to God. He existed, but the knowledge of his existence had not yet been revealed to you. This is the way it occurs to me.

"Man, I mean the thinking principle, that entity we call 'I' is a spiritual being, full and complete. Now that spiritual being is living here on a physical place, coming in contact with things of a physical or material nature. In order that we may do that to the very greatest advantage, God has clothed us with physical bodies, corresponding to our surroundings, through which revelation of physical things may reach us. That is why God pronounced man good when he had created him. He was truly complete, equipped to receive revelation(knowledge) both of things spiritual and things physical; spiritual, through the Spirit; physical, through the body. Now if we try to receive revelations of

spiritual things through the means God has planned for us to receive revelations of physical things, we will be disappointed. That is what the world tries to do. They don't want God to reveal himself through the proper channel, the Spirit; that is too old-fashioned. They want him to reveal himself only through physical things: trees, flowers, etc. overlooking the fact that only evidence, not knowledge, can come that way. True, evidence is important, but it is only a means to an end. Evidence brings belief. Revelation brings knowledge, and Christ has promised that we shall know."

"I can't tell you how anxious I am to learn," Stanley said. "There seems to be such a store of things I don't know."

CHAPTER 13

AN AWAKENING

John Bennett did not awaken but slept the heavy sleep of the drunkard throughout the remainder of the night and all the day following. As night drew near he stirred fitfully, murmured, slept again. His wife, Mary watched wearily but patiently beside the stricken child. She left her post gratefully- most gratefully- to partake of the breakfast which Aunt Sophronia had brought for her and Joey, while that lady took her place at the bedside.

Aunt Sophronia cast frequent and disgusted glances at the degraded heap of manhood on the bed across the room, and ejaculated scornfully, "Law me!" But when Mary Bennett had returned once more from the kitchen, Aunt Sophronia's face had resumed its placid, impenetrable expression of kindness. Aunt Sophronia was not a talker. Few words passed her lips, but many deeds of kindness had left their impress on her soul.

Late in the afternoon, when Doctor Lakeman called on his round of visits, he found his aunt at the bedside of the child while the mother slept.

"This is fine of you, Aunt Sophronia," Stanley said approvingly. "Mrs. Bennett needs the rest badly. She will need to be up much of the time again tonight.

"Ah," he continued, as he sank into the chair his aunt had just vacated, and looked into the face of the child, "this is more like it. She looks much better, She'll get along all right now, with careful nursing."

"What would you do, aunt," Stanley looked up from his work a moment later, a gleam of mischief in his eyes, "if that gentleman there would waken while you are here alone?"

"Gentleman!" The word fairly exploded from Aunt Sophronia's lips. "If that animal over there wakes up while I'm here, I'll see that it behaves itself."

Stanley laughed silently. His aunt looked indeed capable of carrying out her threat. "Well, it will not be necessary," her nephew responded. "The medicine I gave him will keep him sleeping until morning, I think. Tell Mrs. Bennett to get all the rest she can herself during the night. Tell her also if the child is sleeping not to arouse her for the medicine. The sleep will do her more good now. I have several other calls to make," he added, as he prepared to leave. "Father will get supper if you don't get home in time, so don't worry. Stay here as long as you are needed." "I'll do that," his aunt returned. "You tell your pa not to use the milk in that dark crock. I want that."

"All right," Stanley laughed as he went out. He knew some delicacy was in store for them.

So the day wore on. The coming of night did not seem so terrible to Mary Bennett as it had the night before, for new friends had come to share her burdens and life seemed much less dreadful.

When Aunt Sophronia left, she had taken Joey with her. The little lad sat beside her, prim and happy in his prospect of a ride. He rolled his eyes triumphantly to his mother in the doorway when Aunt Sophronia placed the lines in his hands and told him to "drive." When they had gone, Mary Bennett took up her duties with a lighter heart than she had known for many days. Throughout the night the child slept peacefully, arousing only at intervals, at which times the mother gave her the medicine as the doctor had directed, and soothed her again into sleep. As morning drew near she looked at her mother with a light of recognition in her eyes, and the sweet baby smile on her lips. The small white hand reached out and found a resting place on her mother's face. Thus morning found them wrapped in the deep sleep of physical exhaustion.

As the first rays of the sun stole through the muslin curtain, leaving its patch of light on the cabin floor, the figure on the bed in the opposite corner stirred. A moment later a deep groan evidenced the fact that John Bennett was awake. He lay quiet for a moment and then cautiously tried to lift his head from the pillow. Another groan issued from his lips, and his head fell back helplessly; his face was white with suffering. Several minutes passed. He tried once more to raise himself on his elbow, this time with better success, although he buried his face in his hands as though to hide from himself the pain each movement caused.

"Oh, Lord!" he murmured when he made an effort to regain his feet. He leaned against the wall and buried his

head in his arms. After a moment, still pressing his head between his hands, he staggered to the rocking chair in the center of the room and sank weakly into it.

When Mary Bennett aroused from her slumbers, perhaps an hour later, she found him there, his entire attitude expressive of utter dejection. She arose cautiously and went to his side.

“John,” she said gently.

A groan was her only answer. “John,” she said again, laying her hand on his shoulder.

“For God’s sake, Mary, don’t touch me,” he said. “I don’t see how you can.”

A shadow of pain crossed her face. She knew the awful depth of remorse which always followed his debauchery- remorse which left him only when he returned once more into the terrible grasp of that which was dragging him down. And she was helpless. All she could do was to stand by and see him slip from her, see him slip down to the awful depths from which there seemed no hope of return. Several times she remembered he had tried to put it from him. There had been short seasons of hope- hope that after all life might once more take on some of the brightness which had characterized her earlier married life. But always there had come a time when her hope had been dashed from her, and he had sunk back into deeper depths than he had known before, until hope had died. In her heart now there was no hope. She only waited- waited for the end.

The next few hours were intolerable. Vainly she tried to encourage him, tried to lift him from the depths of depression as she had tried many times before, but to no avail. With the clear vision of a sober mind he could comprehend all too plainly the extent of his fall and its dreadful effect upon those he loved.

At noontime she left him and prepared in the kitchen a dinner from the provisions Aunt Sophronia had brought the day before. He looked at the dish suspiciously. “Mary,” he asked, “where did you get that?”

“Friends brought it yesterday, John.” She answered him as she would have answered a sick child. “You will eat now, won’t you? It will steady your nerves. Really, John-“

He pushed the plate from him.

“Has it come to that, Mary? Isn’t there anything to eat in the house except what people bring in?”

There was a new note in his voice. She dared not tell him other than the truth, yet she shrank from adding to his weight of misery.

“Why don’t you tell me, Mary? Why don’t you answer?” he insisted.

“Yes John,” she said finally. “This is all we have to eat, but some way will open before us, surely. Something must.”

“And, Mary,” he continued in a quiet, even tone, unnaturally quiet and even. His wife was frightened. “I suppose you know that my money is gone. Yesterday was payday.”

“I- I thought it would be,” she said, so low he could scarcely hear the words. for a time they were quiet, thinking.

“What are you going to do now, Mary?” he asked.

“Oh, I don’t know, John,” she answered him, her voice breaking. “Something will turn up. Surely- “
“Mary,” That awful, quiet, even tone turned her cold with fear, a fear for which she could not account. “If it were not for me you could get help. No one will help you with a drunken husband about.”

“Oh, John, “ his wife begged through her tears, “I don’t want to talk about it any more now. Later, when you are feeling better and I am stronger, we will talk again. I want you to eat this now. You need it, John.”

Again, he pushed the plate from him with a shudder. “Take it away, Mary, “ he begged. “I don’t want to see it.”
With saddened heart she disappeared once more into the kitchen where she set the plate on the table and stepped though the door into the open air. When she realized that she was no longer under the watchful eye of her husband, she ran lightly down the path and disappeared among the trees. There seemed to be no path, but she wound in and out among the bushes and finally came to a little clearing just beside the lake, only a few feet in diameter, but surrounded on all sides by a dense growth of willows. here, in utter seclusion, she sank in the soft bed of mosses and wept bitterly. After a time, once more strengthened, she rose to her knees and lifted her heart to God in prayer. And while she prayed, could she have seen the shaping of events in her own home, her faith would have failed, and she would have thought indeed that God had forsaken her.

CHAPTER 14

A SUDDEN CHANGE OF PLAN

No sooner had Mary Bennett left the room in which her husband had been seated than he arose from his chair and softly closed and bolted the door leading to the kitchen. This precaution was unnecessary had he only known,

for his wife had already left the house. Very quickly now he crossed the room and lifted the curtain which fell over the box in the corner and took from it a short, black pistol. He examined it minutely, appeared satisfied with the loading, and slipped it into the bosom of his shirt. Then he picked up his battered hat and went out.

John Bennett followed the trail leading to the highway, crossed the road, and plunged into the forest on the opposite side. Here, after walking a short distance among the trees, he came to a little ravine, veering slightly to the south. This he knew would lead him into the thickest part of the forest.

Without once pausing he walked on until he had covered nearly a mile, then crossing a brooklet he climbed a slight elevation, and, entering a thicket, was lost to view. No better place could have been chosen for his purpose. The woods were deep and quiet. The very deadness of the quietude seemed to suggest that civilization was far removed. Here, in a natural enclosure, seated on the log of a fallen tree, John Bennett drew from its resting place the weapon he had secreted. The sudden snapping of a twig in the dead silence of the place made him start guiltily, but in another moment he had learned the cause, as a little brown squirrel ran into view. When it spied him, it stopped suddenly in its frolic, eyed him suspiciously, and then scampered off. From among the leaves above his head a blue jay watched him cautiously; then the whir of wings announced that it also was seeking a safer distance. These were the only sounds of the forest.

Satisfied once more that there was no danger of detection, John Bennett lifted the weapon and placed the muzzle against his breast. A feeling of nausea possessed him. Shaking violently, he lowered the weapon once more, and his face turned a sickly white.

"This won't do," he murmured in self-condemnation, while the muscles of his face set in fierce determination. He raised the weapon again, this time holding it from him almost at arm's length. He shut his eyes that he might not see, and slowly brought his finger back on the trigger.

"What on earth!"

The bullet went wild. The weapon had been knocked forcibly from his fingers. John Bennett gazed in amazement at a tall young man with flashing blue eyes and a crutch in his hand, who stood before him.

"Now look here, stranger!" the young man said. "I don't know you or what kind of tomfoolery you are up to, but it seems I came just in time. Now suppose you tell me what this is all about. Tell me what your trouble is."

The big man before him faltered out his story. Alfred listened gravely, sympathetically, as the tale advanced. Finally he came to comprehend that this man was the father of the little lad who had interested him so much, and the man of whom Stanley and Aunt Sophronia had been telling him.

It was the same old story of a useless struggle against the awful, burning appetite for drink which always ended in failure. Alfred gathered that he thought his family would be better off with him out of the way.

"Now that is possibly true," Alfred said. "Your family might be better off with you out of the way than to have you with them, the way you tell me you have been living. But that is not the point. What effect is this going to have upon your boy? Don't you think it would be bad enough for him to have always to remember that his father was a drunkard without having the additional disgrace of his becoming a suicide as well? Now it seems to me that the thing for you to do is to brace up. Oh, I know it's hard." He cut the other off as he saw him about to speak. "And I don't care how many times you have tried and failed, either. The thing for you to do is to brace up." He repeated the words emphatically as he took a seat on the log by the other's side. "Say," he asked suddenly, "do you believe in Christ?"

John Bennett looked at him blankly for a moment, and then said: "Oh, I guess so. At least I used to when I was a boy."

"Don't you now?"

"Well, I guess I had just about forgotten all about him."

"Tell me what you know about him."

"They used to tell us in Sunday school that he was the Son of God and that he came down here and was killed." "Yes," Alfred said, "and what did he come for?"

"I think they said to save the people." The wretch thought a moment and then shook his head. "But that doesn't mean me," he said. "Christ never meant to save me. I've been too bad for that."

"That's just where you are mistaken," the young man answered him. "That does mean you. But of course if you won't let him, he can't do anything for you. That is the reason you have always failed. You've always tried by yourself to quit drinking. You should have asked Christ to help you. I suppose you have not offered a prayer since you were a boy."

"No," John Bennett answered. "My wife sometimes prays, but I can't remember that I ever did."

"Well, will you kneel down here now and let me ask God to help you?"

The other nodded. Awkwardly he followed Alfred's example and got down on his knees beside the log. There, far removed from the world about them, where the soft breezes whispered through the trees and the birds sang

unheeded, Alfred laid the matter before his God. John Bennett was astonished, for never before had he heard any man talk to God as to a friend; and the very assurance with which the man spoke made him feel that after all perhaps there was a God who cared. He listened as Alfred mentioned how this man beside him had tried in his own strength to put from his life that which degraded him; how he had failed. He spoke of the family whose lives were one long scene of hardship and privation because of this thing which had become too big for the man, and asked that he might have help- help from the Christ whom he had forgotten, but who had not forgotten him; help from the angels who are ministering spirits to minister to those who dwell upon the earth; help from the Holy Spirit by whom the Father drew all men unto Christ; asked that he might as a servant of God on earth be permitted also to be united with that host of heaven in bringing about the salvation of this soul. And, last of all, he asked that the man might help himself- help himself with all the strength of character he possessed.

When the prayer was ended, John Bennett was in tears. He had felt an influence, a power which had accompanied it, quite new and incomprehensible to him.

“Now,” Alfred said, “I think we had better go home and tell your wife about it, don’t you?”

“Do you think I can make it, sir?” his companion asked doubtfully.

“No,” Alfred answered emphatically. “You can’t. Not alone. You can do your best. After that, trust Christ. Will you try?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” the man answered eagerly. “I will try.”

“Don’t forget to ask God to help you. Don’t try to do it alone,” Alfred said as they moved off among the trees.

CHAPTER 15

THE EVENING ATTENDANCE GROWS

“Doctor Lakeman and Spider had had a busy morning. An urgent call had taken them several miles into the country. Noontide found them returning along the highway about a mile from the Turkey Creek bridge. Spider, flecked with foam, cantered wearily. Stanley removed his hat and wiped his brow.

Spider swerved slightly from the center of the road and brushing unexpectedly against the weeds which framed the highway, started from their hiding place droves of grasshoppers, which jumped with free and easy leaps to neighboring weeds, where they swung precariously as man and beast passed them by.

“Now this is more like it,” Stanley murmured as they rode under the shade of a large maple tree and stopped. He took off his hat and fanned himself. Spider sleepily drove the flies from her back with a sweep of her long, black tail, lowered her head, and seemed to sigh. Stanley laughed, “Oh, we’re not stationed here for the afternoon,” he said. “We haven’t had dinner yet.”

However, so great is the power of suggestion that he jumped from the saddle and stretched himself luxuriously on the soft grasses at the foot of the tree, where he lay dreamily watching a band of insects swarming in the sun. After a while he bestirred himself, jumped into the saddle, and urged the reluctant animal once more into the heat of the dust laden highway as Spider supposed, homeward bound.

They had not ridden far until they came to a familiar trail leading from the highway. Spider recognized that trail and knew that home and food were not yet to be considered. With meekly submissive air she turned from the highway and cantered up to the little cottage in the woods.

“Spider, you’re learning,” Stanley said encouragingly. “You’ll make a doctor’s horse yet.” Spider rubbed her nose affectionately upon her master’s shoulder as he dismounted and led her farther into the shade of the trees.

“There, you can nibble that grass,” he said, “while I run in and see the Bennett child. Thank goodness there’s no danger here, now.”

A moment later Stanley stood in the cottage door. “Why, Mrs. Bennett!” he exclaimed. “What is the matter?” He found her kneeling before a box in the corner, with ghastly face, staring blindly into space. “Mrs. Bennett!” he said again when she did not answer.

“Oh!” She staggered to her feet. “What has he done?”

“What has who done?” he asked. “Try to tell me calmly what has happened. Let me help you.”

Mary Bennett leaned against the wall by the window, her eyes wide with horror. Stanley saw her again bring nerves and muscles under the control of her will. When she spoke it was in a very quiet voice. “Doctor Lakeman, I’m afraid my husband has killed himself.”

“Oh, surely not. Why do you think that?”

Then she told him of the depths of remorse into which John Bennett sank when he had awakened in a sober condition.

"I never saw him as he was this morning," she said. "He seemed almost desperate. But I thought he would just go off and drink again as he always has done, to drown his own remorse. Oh, I don't know what to do." Her voice ended almost in a wail.

"What makes you think he hasn't just gone off to drink again? Perhaps he has."

Mary Bennett pointed to the box before which he had found her kneeling.

"The gun is gone," she said. "And I found the door leading to the kitchen locked. He evidently did not want me to come into the room until after he had succeeded in getting away."

"Do you know how long he has been gone?" Stanley asked.

"I can't tell," she answered. "You see I have neglected much of my work since baby was sick. I stopped to water my flowers. I think I was not away more than half an hour. He probably has been away about that time."

"I see," Stanley said. "Do you know where he would be most likely to go?"

"I can't tell in the least," she answered. "Somewhere in the woods, I suppose."

"I'll see what I can do," he said. "In the meantime, try to think you might be mistaken. Perhaps after all, it may not be so bad."

Stanley stepped to the bedside and hastily assured himself that all was well with the child, then left her with the promise that he would return often and let her know how the search progressed.

"I can't think it will be so bad," he said as he left her. He walked first to the lake shore and carefully scanned the beach. There was no one in sight. Then he entered the thicket just north of the cottage and searched carefully all the stretch of forest between the lake and the highway.

Once his heart almost stopped beating, as, standing on the decayed trunk of a fallen tree, he caught a glimpse of an old coat lying near a clump of bushes a little to the left. A closer examination showed that the garment had lain long in that spot, almost falling to pieces as he endeavored to lift it. With a sigh of relief he once more resumed his search. Finally, having satisfied himself that John Bennett had not visited that part of the woods, he returned to the cottage.

"Ave you heard anything?" he asked Mrs. Bennett, who stood in the doorway.

"Nothing," she replied. "I was – oh, listen!"

They were not mistaken. Voices were plainly distinguished along the path. Stanley turned to the woman in the doorway, a question in his eyes, but she was looking intently at the point where the trail opened to their view. The voices were heard again. Stanley saw the face of the woman light up with gladness and knew she had recognized one of the voices as that of her husband. Then came the reaction. Her face took on once more that indescribably weary look. The shoulders drooped with weariness, and she steadied herself by holding to the door casing, but with it all came the old brave smile.

"It is just another of the experiences which belong to life, I think, doctor," she said.

It was now Stanley who seemed almost startled when his eyes fell on the pair who suddenly came into view. An exclamation of surprise fell from his lips as he recognized John Bennett's companion. Alfred raised his hand in greeting to Stanley as they drew near. John Bennett came forward with hanging head, not daring to meet his wife's gaze. The woman left her position at the door and went forward to meet them.

"Oh, John!" she said, "you have given me such a fright. Doctor Lakeman has been searching for you. I thought," The voice ended. She could not bring herself to say the words.

"I found your husband in the woods," Alfred said. "He seemed to be troubled. We have had a long talk, he and I. We thought we would come and talk matters over with you. Mr. Bennett has decided, with the help of God, to lay aside the thing which has caused so much of his trouble and yours; has decided to begin again. I am right, am I not, Mr. Bennett?"

John Bennett nodded, but still did not look up. Shame for all the wrongs of his life weighed him down. Mary Bennett's eyes filled with tears. Her experiences of the past lessened her faith in his ability to carry out his resolves, yet the pity of it all welled up in her heart. She dared not trust her voice, but laid her hand gently on her husband's arm. Stanley stepped forward and held out his hand to John Bennett.

"Shake hands, Mr. Bennett," he said. "It will be a hard fight, but I believe you can win out. I hope you will let us be your friends."

John Bennett gave the doctor his hand, and for the first time lifted his eyes. Stanley did not know his greatest fear lay in the fact that he had no friends other than those who were ready to drag him down- none to help him. Thus gratitude for the offer of friendship lighted his eyes, and for a moment they seemed to lose something of their deadness and take on once more their luster of life. In that moment Stanley realized that John Bennett had been a handsome man; knew that submerged beneath the ravages of drink were the remnants of what might have been a

splendid specimen of manhood. Stanley glanced at Alfred and read in the expression of his face that the reassembling and reasserting of that manhood was the work he hoped to accomplish. It was a big undertaking. When the young men left them two hours later, much had been explained and much encouragement given. John Bennett had arranged to return to his work, and Stanley had attended to the furnishing of provisions to last them through the week which was to follow, when John Bennett would again receive his wage.

“That will be the danger point,” Stanley said to Alfred when they were alone.

“Yes,” Alfred returned, a troubled look on his face. “It will be a hard pull.”

They walked a short distance in silence, Stanley leading Spider, who could not understand why dinner should be so much delayed. Finally Alfred spoke again.

“I have taken the liberty to ask him to come over this evening and study with us. Do you mind?” he asked.

“Just the thing!” Stanley exclaimed. “That will fill up his evenings. I’m so glad you thought to do it. I wish Mrs. Bennett could come, too, but she can’t leave the baby, of course.”

“I think I will call and talk to her occasionally,” Alfred said. “I like to teach the gospel to those who have so little of brightness in their lives. I always think it is such as she in whom Christ must be specially interested. ‘Weary and heavy laden’ – doesn’t that seem to fit her?”

“Couldn’t describe her better,” Stanley returned earnestly. And so it came about that John Bennett was added to the little group who studied beneath the honeysuckle, and his wife daily looked forward to the coming of the light-haired stranger who thereafter always accompanied Doctor Lakeman on his visits, And who taught her the “way of life” more perfectly.

CHAPTER 16

PUTTING THE MAP TOGETHER

“Well, I’m not so sure of that,” Bill Lakeman said. “I’ve never had so very much faith in God myself. What little I’ve got from you the last few evenings just about represents the sum total of all the faith I ever have had. According to that passage of Scripture, I’m afraid my chances will be slim after all.”

Alfred laughed good-naturedly. “You’ve forgotten, Mr. Lakeman,” he said, “that faith cometh ‘by hearing.’ Now according to your own statement, I don’t think you have heard a great deal about the plan of salvation, so you cannot expect to have a great deal of faith. Larson has said: ‘In the acquiring of truth we must begin by unfolding the truth we already possess.’ So it is with faith. To gain more faith we must begin by adding to that which we already have, no matter how little or undeveloped that faith may be. No two persons can start the acquirement of faith from exactly the same point. We must each start by building upon our own foundation.

“One sacred writer has gone back to the beginning of the matter and has said, ‘If we only have a desire for faith, if we will nourish that desire it will take root and grow until it will become faith.’ So we see that in our advances toward God we may have a very small starting point, but if only we have a desire to learn of him and use that desire as a starting point, we may obtain a knowledge of him. NO greater hindrance to progress can exist than the disposition to try to imitate the understanding or development of another. So you need not worry because your faith overnight has not grown into something wonderfully strong. I have very little faith in this ‘get-religion-quick’ theory. It often works out like the ‘get-rich-quick’ business; that is, it doesn’t work out. The Lord had a better plan. He said, ‘Line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little and there a little.’ That plan runs throughout all his works. This honeysuckle for instance; it grew. ‘constantly adding to that which it already had, it has become strong and beautiful. It did not just spring up. The trees in the grove there have acquired their stature in the same way, gradual growth. It is one of the supreme laws of God, yet in his spiritual world they would have us disregard it entirely. Paul has said, ‘Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord.’ “

With the coming of evening the little group had gathered once more beneath the honeysuckle. The soft breeze of evening stealing up from the creek reached them, bringing with it the fragrance of flowers. The birds still twittered among the trees of the grove, contending with each other as they sought their rest. Far below, the melody of many voices arose from the regions of the swamp and mingled with the subdued murmur of the innumerable species of the insect world homeward bound, the activities of another day past.

“Then you do not believe that we become the children of God by belief in Christ?” Jennie raised her eyes incredulously to Alfred.

“Belief in Christ is absolutely necessary to become children of God,” he answered. “There is no other name given whereby man can be saved. But I sometimes think we are quite as much mixed on the subject of belief in Christ as we are on many other subjects. Belief in Christ means more than merely assenting to the fact that Jesus is

the Christ. Merely believing that fact will not bring salvation. Christ gave us to understand that the devils believed, but it did not bring them salvation. Christ came into the world and instituted a plan whereby men, through obedience to this plan, might become the sons of God. A true belief in Christ means not only assenting to, but applying the plan Christ instituted.”

“That reminds me,” Bill Lakeman commented, “of a little talk I had with Silas Perkins this afternoon. I undertook to tell him that I did not agree with Squire Parsons’ policy in the state legislature. ‘What!’ he said. ‘Don’t you believe in Squire Parsons?’ I told him I didn’t believe in any man whose policy would mean so much indebtedness with such a small return.”

“That’s the thought exactly,” Alfred said. “To believe in a man means also to believe in his policy or plan. Tonight, if it is agreeable to all, I would like to take up the study of the plan Christ gave, that we might become the sons of God and joint heirs with Christ.”

“That suits me,” Stanley said, the others also assenting. Alfred continued;

“Now I have here a sheet of paper for each of us, and a pencil. You will see that I have written at the top of each the question: ‘What must I do to be saved?’ It will be our object tonight to answer that question, at least in part.”

“I’ve heard that question answered from the pulpit a thousand times,” Bill Lakeman broke in. “That’s all the preachers know how to preach about in this town.”

“I’m inclined to think, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred returned, an amused smile playing about his lips, “that there is just where the trouble lies. You’ve heard it answered ‘from the pulpit.’ I am glad to say we are not answering questions ‘from the pulpit’ tonight.”

“Oh, Stewart!” Stanley said jestingly, “I’m afraid some of these reverend gentlemen would think you were a more dreadful infidel than they have thought either father or I.”

“I haven’t the least doubt of it,” Alfred answered. “In that respect I am something like the Apostle Paul: ‘After the manner which ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.’” After a moment he continued: “Well, suppose we try to find in the Bible the answer to our question, What must I do to be saved? Miss Burnside, you will find one of the requirements necessary in Acts 16:31.

Jennie read: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.’”

“Now we have learned that belief or faith is our first answer. Let’s put it down on our paper. First, belief or faith in Christ.”

“That answers your question, doesn’t it? What’s the use of going any farther?” Bill Lakeman asked, a telltale sparkle in his eyes, but a very serious expression on his face. If he had expected to disconcert Alfred, he was mistaken. Smilingly ignoring his question, that young man turned to Aunt Sophronia and asked: “Miss Lakeman, how do you make bread?”

“Why, I take some flour—”

“Ah, we have learned,” Alfred interrupted her, leaning back and sighing with satisfaction, “how to make bread. We will take some flour and rest in the enjoyment of the anticipation of the splendid bread we will have, using that one ingredient, which will be entirely sufficient.”

Aunt Sophronia grunted. “It’s fine bread you would have,” she said. “Not even the pigs would eat it, let alone Bill and Stanley.”

The party laughed heartily, but Alfred was suddenly serious. It impressed him as truly sad that such an obvious truth of the physical world should be understood and accepted so easily, while the same truths of the spiritual world should be so little known.

“It is equally true,” he said, “that we cannot obtain the great salvation without using Christ’s entire recipe.” Bill Lakeman nodded approval. Alfred paused a moment, waiting for further questions, then continued; “Mr. Lakeman, will you read Acts 2:38?”

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” ‘

“Now, Miss Lakeman, will you turn to Acts 17:30 for us?”

“‘And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.’” ‘

“We find one thing especially emphasized in these verses. What is it?”

“That we should repent, is it not?” Jennie asked.

“That we should repent,” Alfred repeated. “Now we can write on our papers: Second, repent. We have now two answers to our question, What must I do to be saved; Have faith or belief in Christ and repent. Which do you think we should accept?”

“Well, I’d take them both or I wouldn’t take either,” the old man said emphatically. “I’ve seen too much of this accepting just a part of the Bible.”

“Certainly,” Alfred said. “It’s just as sensible to think of making our bread out of flour alone, as it is to try to apply just one, any one, of the parts of the plan Christ has given. Now, what next? Did you notice, Mr. Lakeman, that something else goes with the repentance mentioned in the verse you read? Will you look at it again?”

“It says repent and be baptized.”

“All right. Now, Mr. Bennett, will you see if we can find confirmation of that thought in Mark 16:16?”

John Bennett looked through his Bible and back again, and glanced helplessly at Alfred. Jennie, perceiving his trouble, reached for his book and helped him find the place. When it was found, he read with ease.

“ ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. ‘ ‘

“Now, what is our third requisite?”

“Baptism,” Stanley said.

“My church has taught me always that baptism wasn’t really necessary to being saved. Of course one could be baptized if he really wished to be, but it was not really essential to salvation.” Jennie advanced the objection timidly. Bill Lakeman and Stanley exchanged glances. They were curious to know how their guest would answer her.

“Yes, I know that is a popular teaching,” Alfred said. “Perhaps we had better stop and examine it for a while. There is a thought in Revelation 22:19 . Miss Burnside, will you read it?”

Jennie read: “ ‘And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.’ ” Jennie looked puzzled. She did not see the application.

“Now, Mr. Lakeman, will you read Deuteronomy 12:32?”

“ ‘What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. ‘ ‘

“These two passages of Scripture tell us how the Lord feels toward any person who takes away from his commandments. Now let us see. Stanley, will you read Acts 10:48?”

“ ‘And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.’ ‘ ‘

“ This,” Alfred went on, “In connection with Peter’s answer to the question, ‘ What shall we do?’ when he said, ‘Repent and be baptized,’ seems quite emphatic to me. I challenge the right of any man or set of men to take from these commandments. So I think, Miss Burnside, that when your church or its pastors taught you that baptism was not essential, they were guilty of ‘taking from’ the commandments of God, and must come under his condemnation.”

“Whew! That’s pretty strong!” Stanley said.

“No stronger than the Bible,” Alfred answered. “No man has the right to change the plan of God.”

“I think you are right,” Bill Lakeman said. “Perhaps if men had not made so free trying to make over the gospel of Christ to suit themselves, there wouldn’t be so many different churches in the world, nor so many infidels, either. So much religious confusion is enough to puzzle any man.”

“Well,” Alfred said, laughing, “we’ll just put baptism down on our papers, anyhow. Third, baptism. There we have it now. What is baptism? Miss Lakeman, will you read Matthew 3:11?”

Aunt Sophronia hastily readjusted her glasses and read: “ ‘I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me....he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ ‘ ‘

“John seemed to have in mind,” Alfred continued, “two divisions of baptism – that of water and the Holy Ghost. Now, let’s see what else we can find. Mr. Lakeman, will you read John 3:5?”

“ ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ‘ ‘

“Christ has the same thought. Baptism of water and Spirit. Thus we see that baptism is twofold. Now, on our papers, after our word ‘baptism,’ let us place a brace and make two divisions: a. Water: b. Spirit. We now have on our papers the following outline as a result of our investigation:

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. Have faith, or belief
2. Repent
3. Be baptized.....a. By water
.....b. By Spirit

“Does that agree with what we all have? All right. Now we will investigate more fully our first division – by water. How do we get it? Mr. Bennett, will you read Matthew 3:16?”

When Jennie had again found the place, John Bennett read: “ ‘And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.’ ‘ ‘

“Now, Miss Burnside, we would like to hear Acts 8:38,39.”

“ ‘And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. ‘ “

“From these verses, “ Alfred continued, “we learn that both the one baptizing and the one to be baptized go down into the water. So that is point one under how it is performed- going down into the water. Now for point two. Stanley, will you read Romans 6:4,5?”

“ ‘Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also shall walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.’ “

“ These verses give us points two and three; Point two, burial; point three, planting. We must be ‘buried’ or ‘planted’ in the likeness of the death and resurrection from the dead.”

“Well, my baptism wasn’t much like that, I can tell you,” Aunt Sophronia spoke up, looking over the tip of her glasses. “Three drops went on my head and one on each shoulder.”

“That wasn’t much of a burial, was it?” Alfred smiled.

“No, nor planting, either,” Bill Lakeman said. “I’d like to see the looks of my crop if I undertook to plant corn that way.”

“Yes, and I don’t think I would like to be the health officer if we buried people that way,” supplemented Stanley.

“Is that why we are immersed,” Jennie asked, “ because the Bible says we are to be buried with Christ? I never thought to ask why we were immersed when I was baptized.”

“That is the reason,” Alfred answered. “You see we have just found out from the Bible that both the candidate and the one performing the rite of baptism go down into the water. Then the Bible says we are ‘buried’ or ‘planted’; it speaks also of coming up out of the water. Another place likens baptism to a birth. So you see immersion is the only way that is in harmony with the Bible.” Alfred paused a moment, thinking. “Those things are not taught clearly enough,” he continued. “Even the churches which practice baptism seem to be afraid to explain it, fearing someone will think they are teaching doctrine. I dare say, Miss Burnside, your pastor did not tell you why you were baptized.”

“Why, no,” Jennie answered, “I don’t think he did. You see, after we thought our sins had been forgiven we were baptized, just to show that we were willing to obey, I think.”

“If it were not such a serious question, “ Alfred said, “I think I should find the teachings of the world along religious lines sometimes positively funny. They place Christ in the same position as an unwise mother I once knew. Her son, Bobbie, obeyed her implicitly. No matter what she asked him to do, he went immediately and tried to do that thing. That was all very fine, for Bobbie had great confidence in his mother; but the time came when the mother was so proud of her boy’s obedience that she began to try to show him off when company came. At first the boy was puzzled. What object could be back of some of his mother’s commands? He obeyed, but a question was forming itself in his mind. Then one day the boy understood; his mother was just showing off his obedience. The following day Bobbie and his friends were engaged in a very important game of ball. Three boys were on bases and Bobbie was at bat. Bobbie must win that game. Company came. Bobbie’s mother came to the door, ‘ Bob-ee.’ The call rang out clearly over the field. Bobbie threw down his bat and went to the house. The game was lost. When Bobbie reached his mother’s side she only said, ‘ Oh, I’ve changed my mind. I don’t want you now, dear; you may go back to your game.’ Bobbie never again obeyed unquestioningly.

“Is Christ like that? Does he try to show off our willingness to obey him, or is there a reason for, a something to be accomplished by obedience to his commands? Did Christ place the ordinance of baptism in his church just to see if he could make us get wet in our efforts toward blind obedience? I can’t think Christ is like that. No, he tells us why- tells us what is accomplished by it. Stanley, will you read Acts 2:38?”

“ ‘Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ “

“ You see Peter did not tell them to be baptized because they thought their sins were remitted already. He told them to be baptized for the remission of sins. Now, Mr. Lakeman, will you read Mark 1:4? We then will have another witness.”

“ ‘John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.’ “

“Now, one more. Miss Lakeman, Acts 22:16.”

Aunt Sophronia read: “ ‘And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’ “

“Well, “ Bill Lakeman said as he carefully studied the point of his pencil, “I always thought the Bible taught that it was the blood of Christ that washed away sins. Now, you’ve got it here that it is baptism in water. I’ll declare,

I don't know which you expect us to believe."

"Both," Alfred asserted seriously; "it was the shedding of Christ's blood that brought about his death. It was through his death and burial that the bands of death were broken and we are redeemed from the grave. Paul says our baptism is a like figure of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. So you see the blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin and baptism for the remission of sins are only two ways of expressing the same thing, for the latter typifies the former, ' a like figure, ' as Paul puts it. Now, let's examine our papers once more. We have learned that water baptism is performed by, first, going down into the water; second, coming up out of the water. It is compared to, third burial; fourth, planting; fifth, birth. On our papers we will now place another brace after the word 'water.' In this brace we will make two divisions, method or mode, and purpose or object. After mode we will place the five points mentioned above; after purpose, the words 'for the remission of sins.' We may look from one end of the Bible to the other and will find no other object given for baptism."

"According to that," Jennie said, "our sins are not forgiven when we are converted, but when we are baptized. Then, Mr. Stewart, why do we go to the altar and why do they pray there that our sins may be forgiven? The minister told me when I was converted to stand up and tell them my sins had been forgiven."

"I know," Alfred said. "I went through the same experience myself once. When I was only a child I went forward at a revival meeting. The minister told me to get up and tell the people my sins were forgiven and I did it because I didn't know any better. Afterwards, when I began to study the Bible, I began to see the lack of harmony. I discovered that was not the Bible way. In the Bible I could not find a record of any such proceeding --"

"It isn't there," Bill Lakeman interrupted. "There's not a mourner's bench in the whole Bible."

"I also made that discovery," Alfred continued. "when I did so I was puzzled; then I began to doubt. Afterwards I learned better. Now our outline reads;

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. Faith
2. Repentance
3. Baptism -Water - Method 1. Going down into 2. Coming up out of. 3. Planting. 4. Burial. 5. Birth.
-Spirit - Object - For the remission of sins.

"Now we are ready to study the baptism of the Spirit. We will follow the same course. First we will learn how or what ordinance is used, and why it is given. "

"That baptism of the Spirit bothers me," Stanley said. "I can't get that through my head. I went to a revival meeting last winter where they said they had an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and I thought if that was a baptism of the Holy Spirit I didn't want any of it. They shouted and jumped upon their seats. One woman lay down on the ground and rolled around a while and finally fainted. It didn't look good to me.

"We are told in the word of God," Alfred answered, "that many spirits have gone out into the world, and we are commanded to try the spirits. We are also told that the Spirit of God is not the author of confusion. The condition you mentioned sounds like confusion to me. God is the supreme intellect of the universe. When we begin to look into the wonderful harmony of all things, nature's serenity in peace, its magnitude in disturbance, we can begin to comprehend in a limited way the true significance of that intelligence. Now, I can't imagine that wonderfully intelligent Being prompting any person to get down and roll on the ground. The very thought is repellent to intelligence. "

"Do I understand you," Bill Lakeman asked, "to say that all this supposed baptism of the Spirit which usually accompanies revival services is a spirit of the Devil?"

"Not necessarily," Alfred answered. "It is quite evident to me that the Devil is working, perhaps to a greater extent than we can comprehend. However, to say it is all of the Devil would be presumption. I know there are people in the world who think that whatever is not of God is of the Devil. I think that is just as misleading as many other half-truths that are in the world. One sacred writer has expressed a more sensible view of the matter. He gives us to understand that there are three sources from which we can expect such things to come, God, man, and the Devil. If they come from God, they will be in harmony with God's law and we will know them thereby. If they come from man, they may reflect only the state of his nervous system, or an over-development of his imaginative powers. If they come from the Devil and we study them closely enough, we will discover in them that which leads us away from the truth or entices us to do evil. I think those are the two great objects of Satan."

"That looks reasonable to me," Bill Lakeman said. "I've seen folks get nervous enough to do most anything under some conditions."

The company lapsed into silence. Alfred perceived they were ready to continue their study.

"Well, Miss Burnside," he said, "suppose you start us out on our study by reading Acts 8:17,18. We will see if we can discover how the baptism of the Spirit is received, and with what ordinance."

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money." "

"That will do," Alfred said. "Now, Stanley, read Acts 19:6."

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." "

"What are you driving at, young man?" Bill Lakeman asked. "It looks to me as if you are breaking into unexplored territory."

"I can't see," Jennie spoke up timidly. "how we can have the Holy Ghost at all if it is to come by the laying on of the apostles' hands. There are no apostles now."

"If we turn to 1 Timothy 4:14," Alfred answered, "we will learn that the laying on of hands was practiced not only by the apostles, but by the presbytery of the church. also in the ninth chapter of Acts we read of Ananias, who was not an apostle, using the ordinance of the laying on of hands. The fifth chapter of James also speaks of the elders as using it."

"Well, that's a new one on me," Stanley said. "None of the presbytery of any church that I know anything about do that."

"That may be the reason," Alfred answered, smiling, "there is so little of the gift of the Holy Ghost manifest in the world. Perhaps we have forsaken the law. We are trying to study tonight the plan which Christ left here. It seems to me that the law Christ left here should be here today as he left it. If it is not, somebody has been doing some changing. We have already found out what the Lord thinks of those who 'take away' anything from his plans. I would very much prefer not to be one of them. Now on our papers, after the baptism of the Spirit we can place the words, 'By the laying on of hands.' "

"I'd like to ask you," Bill Lakeman said, "if Cornelius had hands laid on him. We read that the Holy Ghost came on him, but I don't remember it saying anything about the laying on of hands."

"We will need," Alfred answered him, "to distinguish between a baptism of the Spirit which is given to the children of God, those who have named his name, and the Holy Spirit which is given to lead men to Christ. We are told that the Spirit of God lightens every man who comes into the world. We also read of the Spirit of God striving with men to lead them to Christ, but that is quite a different thing from the baptism of the Spirit, the abiding Comforter which Christ promised to send to those who believed. We will understand that fact more clearly as we study the fruits of the Spirit. Now I think we are ready to learn the object of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Lakeman, will you read John 15:26?"

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." "

"Now, Miss Lakeman," Alfred continued, "will you read Acts 5:32?"

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." "

"These two verses give us to understand that one object of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness of Christ. So that will be object number one. Let's put it on our papers; To bear witness of Christ. Now, Mr. Bennett, will you read John 16:13?"

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: ... and he will show you things to come." "

"Now we have object number two: 'To guide into all truth.' Also object number three: 'The showing of things to come.' "

"Why, that would be prophecy, would it not?" Jennie asked. "We can't have prophecy now, can we? I know my church does not think we can."

"Well," Alfred said, "that was one of its missions when it was first given . I cannot read where Christ ever said it would lose its power. I know the world teaches now that the days of prophecy are past. They seem to think the Holy Spirit now can only guide our thoughts, but it was not so in the days of old, and it is not so now. To make that claim is only an acknowledgment that the baptism of the Spirit has never been received. The Spirit of God is not worn out. It is just as capable and real today as when Christ said, ' He will show you things to come.' "

Unconsciously the speaker let his own earnestness vibrate in his voice.

Bill Lakeman regarded him narrowly, questioningly. "Strange!" he muttered under his breath. "Strange!" Alfred went on: "Now one more object, number four . Stanley, will you read Romans 8:14,16?"

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God... The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "

“Then the fourth object is that we may know we are the children of God. Now, let’s look them over again. First, the Spirit is to bear witness of Christ, Second, to guide into all truth. Third, to show things to come. Fourth, as a witness that we are the children of God. If we stop to think deeply what each one of those things means, we will understand how important it is for us to have that Spirit.”

“What I want to know is,” Stanley said, “how are we to know when we get that Spirit? I can’t see that from the verses we have read.”

Alfred turned to his friend in response to his query. “Stanley, he said, “you saw me today where you had no thought of seeing me. How did you know me?”

“Well,” Stanley replied, “that crutch had a very familiar look, but I think it was more the way you pushed back your hat and talked with your free hand. It wouldn’t take a Sherlock Holmes to identify you when you get to talking.”

Alfred blushed and laughed heartily at his own expense. He had long tried to overcome that tendency to talk with his hands, but he would forget sometimes, in his most earnest moments.

“Then,” he said, “I have certain characteristics by which you may know me. Now, if we can discover some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit, perhaps we may learn to identify it. Let us all turn to the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians. In the fourth verse we find these words: ‘Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.’ In verses seven to ten: ‘But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit of the word of wisdom: to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith... to another the gifts of healing... to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.’ Paul goes on to tell us that it is the selfsame Spirit which divides to every man severally as he will. Now I think it is safe to say that as God is unchangeable, his Spirit, if given today, would bestow the same gifts and have the same results as when Christ was here. Now, Mr. Lakeman, will you read Mark 16:17, 18?”

When Bill Lakeman turned the leaves of his great Bible to the place directed, Alfred caught a glimpse of heavy marks around the verses. Bill Lakeman had evidently read them before.

“ ‘And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ “

“Mr. Stewart,” the old man looked up from his Bible almost sternly, “You don’t pretend to believe that, do you? Why, I’ve asked a dozen preachers if those signs followed them who believed their teachings. They all said, ‘No,’ that was not intended for our day; that is done away with.’ I told them that I guessed in that case the whole thing must have been done away with, too. I never expected to find a preacher who believed those verses.”

“Mr. Lakeman, I would like to ask you who it is that those verses say the signs are to follow?”

“ ‘Them that believe.’ “

“Believe what?”

“In Christ, I suppose.”

“We have already agreed,” Alfred went on, “that a belief in Christ means more than just a belief that Christ was the Son of God. We have been studying tonight a part of the plan Christ came here to set in motion for the redemption of man. true belief in him means a belief in and an acceptance of the principles he advocated, a compliance with his plan of redemption. Anything short of this is not a belief. Consequently those who only half believe are not entitled to that promise.

“When I was in school,” continued Alfred, “ we used to do sums in arithmetic, but we never handed in our papers until we had proved our answers. So I think we had better prove our answers before we depend too much on our papers tonight. In order that we may do that, let us turn to Hebrews 6:1. I will read; notice carefully: ‘Therefore leaving the principles-’ Stanley, what do you understand principles to be?”

“Why, a principle is a fundamental law or truth, that from which other laws or truths are derived.”

“Very good. Now notice the wording: ‘Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation-.’ We see by this that Stanley is right, that there are certain fundamental laws, or a foundation. Now let us see what it is – ‘ of repentance from dead works.’ We have found that we are right in one point. Repentance is a part of the principles or foundation. Let us check it on our papers- ‘and of faith toward God.’ Right again. We may check faith’ and the doctrine of baptisms.’ Now we may check our baptisms of water and Spirit- ‘ and the laying on of hands.’ Let us check that. So we are right as far as our study has gone, and have proved our answers.”

“Well,” Bill Lakeman said, his head on one side as he earnestly regarded the paper before him, “I think that sounds all right, but I’m just going to go over that again tomorrow myself. I’ve always found contradictions in the Bible; I can’t think the thing really fits together so well as that.”

Stanley laughed and glanced at Alfred, who had arisen from his seat in a manner to suggest that the study was ended for that night.

“What is the matter, father?” he asked. “Does it begin to look like a map of the United States?”

“It begins to look like a map of something,” Bill Lakeman answered.

Jennie folded her paper and slipped it into her Bible. “I’m like Mr. Lakeman,” she said, “I think I shall go over that again tomorrow. I took all the references. I want to be sure it is all in my Bible by daylight,” she ended as she smilingly drew on her riding gloves.

“You don’t think I have bewitched your Bible, do you?” Alfred asked, joining in her pleasantry.

“You never can tell,” she called back as she tripped lightly down the path to where Daisy stood at the stoop. Alfred gazed after her dreamily. So great was his abstraction that he did not hear Stanley speak his name. Bill Lakeman was talking to John Bennett so he did not hear his son say, with a peculiar sparkle in his dark eyes, “I don’t think the Bible was the only thing bewitched tonight.”

Alfred’s return to consciousness was complete. Blushing furiously, he dared not meet his friend’s scrutiny.

“Never mind, old man,” Stanley said, laying his hand on Alfred’s shoulder and striving vainly to keep the laughter confined to his eyes, “When I have an opportunity I’ll tell you some of my own experiences along those lines.”

“She’s a fine girl,” Alfred ventured timidly.

“Sure she is,” Stanley agreed. “There’s only one finer in all the world.” And the friends laughed in perfect understanding.

After Jennie had ridden away, Alfred stood at the gate and talked to John Bennett. “Don’t give up,” he said earnestly. “You can win.”

“I’ll be working again tomorrow,” John Bennett answered. Then, after a moment he asked falteringly, “When pay night comes will you come down to the mill and walk home with me? We are paid each Tuesday.”

“Why, certainly I will,” Alfred returned. “We can arrange that nicely.”

And so another day with its record drifted into the labyrinth of the past.

CHAPTER 17

AUNT MARIA’S FAITH

When Jennie awoke the morning following, it was with a lighter heart than she had experienced for many days. She sprang from her bed with a song on her lips, and a few minutes later greeted her father in the breakfast room with such a cheerful countenance that that gentleman was surprised out of some of his stolidity and joked heartily with his daughter.

Aunt Maria, the old colored family servant, entering with a tray of fruit for the breakfast table, caught sight of Jennie and exclaimed with easy familiarity born of long and faithful service;

‘I do declare’, Miss Jennie. You’s lookin’ mighty pert dis mornig’. I do b’lieve you all got a new beau.”

“Now, Aunt Maria, “Jennie remonstrated, “you know better. Look at the sunshine out there. Just hear how glad the birds are this morning. Why shouldn’t I look pert?”

“Well, it am strange,” the old woman soliloquized, “how much gladder the birds am on some mo’nins than they am on others, and how much brighter the sun shines on some sunshiny mo’nins than it do on others.”

“Now, Aunt Maria,” Jennie laughed reproachfully, “I’m afraid you are getting deep.”

“I was going to tell you some news, Jennie,” Marion Burnside said, “but perhaps you have already heard; maybe that’s why you’re glad.”

“No, I have heard no news,” Jennie answered. “Is it good news? Please tell me. “

“Very good news, “ her father responded, “but I think I will not tell you at present.”

“Oh, father, do,” Jennie begged.

But Marion Burnside was obdurate and Jennie pleaded playfully, but in vain.

As Marion Burnside arose from the table he looked at Jennie seriously from under his heavy brows.

“If you will come down to the office today,” he said, “I will give you your allowance. I think you will be needing some gowns soon.”

“Why, father!” Jennie looked up in surprise. It was the first time since she could remember that he had made a suggestion in regard to her wardrobe. “I don’t think I need a thing. Besides, don’t you think you are really allowing me too much? I don’t spend it all, and there is so little occasion for the wearing of fine dresses here in Leesburg. It

almost seems a waste of money to buy them.”

As Jennie spoke she arose from the table and followed her father to the door.

“Nevertheless,” he replied with a tone of finality, as he drew on his gloves preparatory to leaving, “I want my daughter to be well dressed.”

With that he left them. Jennie walked into her own little parlor and sank thoughtfully into the divan by the low window. She was puzzled. Why was her father suddenly so anxious about the matters of her dress? He had never even hinted before that he was displeased with the plainness of her gowns. She glanced across to where her figure was reflected in the large mirror which made up a part of the furnishings of the room, and seemed to impart that air of elegance which was the pride of Marion Burnside’s heart. She studied carefully the trim little morning dress she was wearing. She failed to note that it brought out all the graceful curves of her figure or that the arms below the soft fullness of the sleeves looked delightfully well rounded, and she did not see that the folds of filmy lace which fell back from her throat softened her features and enhanced the delicate fullness of her neck. She only realized it was such a dress as any of her girl friends could afford to wear, knew it carefully avoided those extremes dictated by fashion which were so abhorrent to her.

“Oh, well,” she said, “it’s just one of father’s whims. He’ll soon forget it.”

“Aunt Maria,” Jennie turned from the contemplation of her reflection in the mirror as the old lady entered, “What do you think of God?”

“Law, chil’!” Aunt Maria stopped short in astonishment., “what fo’ you ask that question? Don’ you hear the preacher tell all ’bout him?”

“I know, Aunt Maria,” Jennie laughed. “I know what the preacher says, but I want to know what you think.” “Now, honey,” the old woman remonstrated, “you know yo’ ol’ mammy don’ understan’ all dem things. De Good Book say, ‘God is love.’ I know he heahs my praihs. That’s enough for me. “

“That’s just it, auntie. You asked me why I was so glad this morning,” Jennie answered. “It’s because I’ve found out that ‘God is love.’ I never have understood that before.”

After a moment’s quiet thought she asked suddenly: “Auntie, do you believe my mother is in hell?”

“Yo’ mammy ? Why, Miss Jennie! What God send yo’ mammy to hell fo’? God only sends the wicked to hell. Yo’ mammy wa’n’t wicked. Don’ I know? Wa’n’t I with you’ mammy since she was a girl? Don’ yo’ go an’ talk that-away ’bout God.”

“I know, auntie; I know now,” the girl answered, ‘but I didn’t know. That’s why I’m glad.”

“Law, chil’.” The old woman laid her hand affectionately on Jennie’s head. Memories of the past softened her voice to infinite sadness. “We all learn ’bout Him through sufferin’.”

“Did you learn it through suffering, auntie?”

“Yes, honey, dis poah ol’ haht plum broke befoah I learned to lay my burdens on the Lord.”

Such a world of sadness accompanied the words of the black woman that Jennie felt her heart melt in sympathy. She remembered Aunt Maria since childhood as a family fixture. She had scarcely realized that life in passing had left its light of joy and its shadow of sorrow on her heart, and that it was a very human heart which beat under the black exterior.

“Tell me about it, auntie,” she said very tenderly. Then added quickly, “No, don’t if it will hurt you to do so.” “The hurt am there anyhow, chil’,” the old servant answered. “Tellin’ don’ make it no worse. Besides, the good Lord have let the pain grow dull, even if it can’t be taken away. Yes, he do help to make it dull.”

The old lady was silent a moment and then went on in a quiet, even tone:

“It all begun back befoah the wah,” she said. “I was sold into a family to be the wife of another slave.”

“Auntie!” Jennie exclaimed, horror ringing in her voice. “Without finding out if you were willing? “Did they force you to marry?”

“Law, chil’,” the old woman laughed mirthlessly, “they didn’t ask us in dem days. ‘Am you willin’?’ But law, honey, I loved him from the minute I set eyes on him, an’ I was glad. He wasn’t none o’ them lowdown niggahs. He had the kindest voice I ever heard. An’ I felt like my troubles war done. Dey give us a little cabin back in the woods, an’ Sam he worked on ol’ massa’s plantation.

“Dem was the happiest days o’ my life, honey. Sam was always singin.’ I kin hear his voice yet, rollin’ out over the cotton fields.”

“Ol’ massa was always smilin,’ and the missus-“ The old lady shook her head. “We loved ’em, honey, and they was mighty good to us.

“When little Sam war born, law, honey, Sam war proud. Little Sam, they said, looked jis’ like his pa, an’ Big Sam sung louder’n ever. ‘Pears like he was always singin’ them days.

“When little Sam growed older, ol’ massa taught him to walk. I didn’t know what was goin’ on, fo’ ol’ massa kep him over at the big house mos’ all the time, but I wasn’t worried.

“One evenin’, it was little Sam’s birthday, Sam an’ me was sittin’ befo’ de cabin do’, Sam a pickin’ his banjo an’ a-singin’. Ol massa with the missus come a-walkin’ up with little Sam in his arms.

“Look, Maria, ‘ol’ massa said, an’ he set little Sam down ‘bout ten feet away from me.

“‘Go to yo’ mammy, Sammy, “ missus said.

“An’ he come toddlin’ like he was mighty scared, but walkin’ straight to me. It was hard to tell which was de proudest, ol’ massa or big Sam.

“De missus took outen a little box she was a carryin’ in her han’, a locket an’ chain, all gold an’ shiny, an’ fastened it roun’ his neck. I was mighty proud, den, fo’ none of the othah niggahs had gold chains an’ lockets fo’ their babies. It had his name engraved on, ‘Sam Turner’, written in the gold.

“‘Maria, the missus said, ‘ this pickaninny am de light o’ two homes.’

“So time went by. When little Sam was four yea’s ol’, his daddy taught him to sing, an’ they used to set in the evenin’ befo’ the cabin do’ an’ sing; an ol’ massa an’ the missus would come over an listen.

“Little Sam had worn a trail of his own down through the cottonwoods. ‘cross the brook to the big house.

“Den a change come. One mornin’ old massa didn’t get up, an’ befo’ night the missus was left alone. After dem days, big Sam didn’t sing no mo’ in the cotton fiel’s . At evenin’ he would sit by the cabin doah wid little Sam on his knee an’ look out into the cottonwoods. One evenin’ he came home wid his eyes lookin’ big an’ scared, jes like li’l Sam when he war walkin’ to me dat day: but he only said Massa Charles was a comin’ home to help his mammy run the plantation. Massa Charles had run away from home yea’s befo’ an’ near broke the old folks’ hahts. I didn’t know why, but I felt again like I did in dem days befo’ I knew Sam. But law, honey, I knew missus would never sell one of us offen de ol’ plantation, so I tried to be glad an’ to think how I would feel if it was my boy, Sam, a comin’ home after all them years. Law, honey, things went bad enough; but Sam and me said nothin’, fo de missus’ sake, not even when Massa Charles would kick li’l Sam. One day, when li’l Sam was six years ol’, I was a passin’ the window an’ heard Massa Charles say to the missus, and he was lookin at li’l ‘Sam: ‘This place needs fixin’ up mighty bad, mother. Why don’t you sell that boy?’ Law, honey, I nearly dropped the crock o’ milk I was a carryin’ to the cellar, and I thought I would scream; but I heard de missus answer him: ‘I’ll never do it, Charles, not one of ‘em shall ever be sol’ while I live.’

“Law, honey, in all dem happy years I had nearly forgot I was a slave, and while I knew the missus would keep her word, the old fear of bein’ sol’ would come back, an’ I couldn’t keep it off. Not for myself or big Sam; I knew we would never be sol’ offen de plantation. But li’l Sam, oh, I would a heap ruther have thought of bein’ sol’ myself. But the missus had said she would never sell him, so I tried to forget it an’ be cheerful and ‘ happy again. I knew then why big Sam never sung no mo’ in the cotton fields, an’ why he looked off in de evenin’s at the cottonwoods.

“One day, when li’l Sam was eight years ol’, I was a sittin’ by the cabin doah, sewin’ on some things fo’ de missus, an’ a waitin’ for big Sam to come home to his supper. Li’l Sam was playin’ horse with a stick out under de maple tree, when I saw big Sam come hurryin’ from the big house, takin’ li’l Sam’s short cut through the trees, ad’ I knew something was wrong.

“‘Maria,’ he called to me, ‘come quick: the missus am a dyin’.

“I dropped my sewin’ on the groun’ at my feet, steppin’ on the white muslin as I went over it, an’ thinkin’ of nuthin’ but gettin’ to the missus. but it was too late. De missus was propped up in Massa Charles arms, an’ a drawin’ her last breath. I could see her tryin’ to say, ‘Charles, don’,’ but dat was all. We couldn’t understan’ no mo’, and she was gone. Law, honey, I knew what dat meant. When it was over, Sam an’ me went back to the cabin. Neither of us spoke, but we knew our hearts was broke.

“You kin guess the res’, honey. When the estate was settled up, li’l Sam was sol’. I tol’ him befo’ dey took him away, to hide his locket in de groun’ or anywhere to keep it, so he would always know his name, no matter how much it might be changed. If dey didn’t kill him, I s’pose he’s somewhere in the worl’ today. But I don’ ever ‘ spect to find him, Dat’s why I look forward to the day of reunitin’ on the othah shoah.”

“Oh, Auntie Marie,” Jennie exclaimed, “to think I have lived with you all these years and never knew. How selfish I have been; so much wrapped up in my own sorrow not to see something of yours.”

“Law, honey, yo and yo’ mammy been a comfort to me. Yo’ ain’t got nothin’ to blame yo’s’e’f fo’. That’s a long time in de pas’ now, honey, an’ the good Lawd dulled de hurt. No, honey, yo’ been a comfo’t to yo ol’ auntie.”

“Aunt Marie,” Jennie asked softly, “what became of big Sam?”

The old woman shook her head.

“He was no good in the cotton fiel’ or roun’ the plantation after li’l Sam was gone. At the nex’ big auction sale what took place, he was sol’, too. An’ I was kep’ to look after the big house.

“One night when Massa Charles was fas’ asleep, I slipped over to the li’l cabin an’ set it on fire. I know it was

wrong, but I couldn't b'ar to see it there, so deserted like. 'After that I never looked over at the cottonwoods. Sometimes in the middle o' the night I could hear the wind a moanin' through 'em, an' I prayed de good Lawd to send the light o' day.'

The old lady paused reflectively, then went on in her quiet, even voice."

"Big Sam I know am dead. But, honey, I know it will all be straightened out in the nex' worl'. An' that am almos' here. I kin almos' hear the roarin' ob de ribber. Now, honey, don' yo' go an' feel so bad. Dis ol' woman's troubles am almos' ovah. Don' yo' worry.'

"Oh, Aunt Maria,' Jennie murmured.

"Now, Miss Jennie, yo' ol' auntie had no business fo' to go an' make yo' feel bad. Yo' daddy want yo' to come down to the office today an' get yo's'f some fine dresses. Yo' run 'long now, honey, an' don' yo' worry none 'bout dis ol' woman."

"This much I know, auntie, " Jennie said, "you are a better Christian than I. My faith in God is not nearly as strong as yours."

"Law, honey chil', yo' jes wait until yo' am seventy years ol'. Yo' faith in God will be stronger."

"Auntie, " Jennie exclaimed n astonishment, "are you seventy years old?"

"Shuah am, chil' : did'n' I tol' yo' I was married befr' de wa'?"

"Well, well," Jennie said, " I will never be so strong and useful when I am seventy, I'm sure."

"You run 'long now, honey, " the old woman said, rising, 'while I go aftah that gal in the kitchen. I do declar', these niggahs am afraid to work now' days. 'Pears like they's mighty lazy."

"Now, auntie, " Jennie said, as she started up the stairs, "don't scold Annie; she does very well I think."

CHAPTER 18

A FATHER'S ADVICE

Squire Parsons was emerging from Marion Burnside's private office when Jennie entered. He stepped aside gallantly and held the door open for her, giving her a beaming smile as he did so. Jennie, whose mind was occupied with other matters, failed to notice that his attitude was very gracious and his smile much warmer than usual. She only thanked him and stepped within.

Marion Burnside sat at his glass-covered mahogany desk, beaming affably upon the stenographer (a very unusual occurrence) to whom he was dictating. When Jennie entered he swung round in his ponderous chair and smilingly motioned her to a seat opposite him. Smiles on the part of Marion Burnside were very rare, and Jennie experienced something of the feeling of astonishment, which rested upon the little stenographer, who still, with pencil poised, waited for Marion Burnside to continue his dictation.

"You may go, Miss Field," he said, permitting for the first time in his life a conversation with his daughter to interrupt the steady flow of his business.

When she had gone, he reached into his desk and pulled out a large checkbook, and began turning its pages. "Jennie," he said, "I have raised your allowance to trifle, so you need not hesitate in any purchase you desire to make in regard to clothing. I think this will cover."

Jennie gasped when she took the proffered check. The amount was almost double that which he was accustomed to giving her.

Whatever other faults Marion Burnside possessed, he always had provided amply, too amply sometimes, Jennie thought, for those dependent upon him. He did not know that for years Jennie had not used all the money he had given her; that she had formed a habit of dropping into a box in her trunk whatever was left over from one allowance period to another. There was no forethought in this matter. In her mind it had been for future needs, but the time of need had never come. She had not taken the trouble to count it; in fact, the box was entirely forgotten except when there was money left over. Had Marion Burnside known of this he would have been astonished at his daughter's lack of business caution.

"Do you wish me to get something special- something expensive, father?" she asked, not a little puzzled. "I can think of nothing I really need. And father," this with hesitation, "I don't really like to dress better than my friends . They like and understand me better if I don't."

"That's just the trouble, Jennie," he said, not smilingly now, but sternly, "You are not exclusive enough. I have noticed for sometime this tendency of yours to keep on the level with your friends. I don't like it. You should remember that your condition is life is quite different from theirs. Now, I'll tell you what I have done, and I trust you

to carry out my wishes. There is a salesman in town with a fine line of dresses. I want you to pick out several, and I want them selected with a view to style. Also I want you to have some party gowns.”

“Party gowns!” Jennie exclaimed. “Why, father!”

“I know, Jennie,” Marion Burnside went on; “I know you dislike parties. When your mother lived she never compelled you to go, which was to your great detriment even as a child. But I think the time has come when you should give these things more of your attention. You will be married some day, and I mean that you shall marry within your station, and you will need to give some heed to the social end of your husband’s home.”

“It will be time enough to think of those things when they come,” Jennie returned. “I can’t see why I should attend these tiresome parties now. I haven’t any husband’s home with a social end to look after.”

Marion Burnside had arisen and was pacing the office floor. He stopped now beside Jennie’s chair, with hands thrust deep in his pockets, and glared down at her.

“When the time comes it will be too late. Besides, how do you expect to get that husband? Do you think he will just come along and pick you up? Let me tell you, young lady, that is where husbands are caught, at parties. So I want you not only to attend them, but to give them.”

“Am I to judge by that,” Jennie asked, revulsion creeping into her tones, “that you want me to ‘catch’ a husband?”

“You are not to judge anything, only do as I tell you,” Marion Burnside said with finality.

Jennie knew that the discussion was ended, knew he would never mention it again, but would expect her to obey. The brightness had gone out of her face when she arose.

“If that is all,” she said, “I will run upstairs a moment and see Cynthia.”

“That is all,” he said, “Only I think that one of the girls who labors in my factory is hardly the companion for my daughter.”

“There is no better girl living than Cynthia Brown, father,” Jennie returned with some heat.

“It’s not a matter of character,” he said; “it’s a matter of standing, but go on. We’ll talk of that some other time.”

Jennie beat back a tendency to tears as she ascended the stairs. When she passed the office doors, all evidence of luxury ceased. Here, amid the hum of machinery and the clatter of the voices of the workers, only the direct necessities were seen. Great wooden tables were piled high with cloth of every description. She passed around these and crossed the room behind the cutters’ table where she nodded brightly to two men, who with great knives cut away at the cloth piled high before them. Winding around the pressers’ tables she came to the long rows of machines, at which the girls stitched and gossiped. Well to the end of one of these rows sat a girl who was doing neither. Her machine was idle, the seam under her needle half completed. One shapely hand held it in place, while the other reaching under the arm of the machine, steadied the cloth as it came through. In that attitude she had stopped and was gazing dreamily out of the window on to the top of a tar-covered roof beyond. The light of the window behind her fell over a wealth of golden brown hair and lighted the profile of her face. “I’m going to have you sit like that for a picture sometime,” Jennie said, as she dropped into a vacant chair beside her friends.

“Oh, Jennie, I’m so glad to see you,” Cynthia exclaimed. “I’ve been wanting to talk to you for so long.”

“I haven’t seen you for a whole week, have I?” Jennie returned, laughing. “That is a long time.”

“Well, at any rate, I do want to talk to you,” Cynthia replied.

“I came to ask you to come home with me to dinner,” Jennie said. “Father is having his lunch downtown with Squire Parsons. We’ll have the table all to ourselves. Will you come?”

“Gladly,” Cynthia answered. “I don’t have to work this afternoon. We are all caught up with the pressers. I’ve made just fifteen cents this morning.”

“Goodness,” Jennie said. “Well, finish up what you have. I’ll go down and borrow one of father’s stenographers for a little while and then we’ll go home together.”

Jennie did not tell her friend of the letter she dictated that day. Indeed she mentioned it to no one, but was keenly disappointed about two weeks later, when a letter came to her which read:

“Dear Miss Burnside: Your letter received. Contents carefully noted. We would be glad to serve, you, but consider the case hopeless. No record ever was kept in regard to the selling of slaves. They were sold and resold, often with names changed. It is therefore useless to take up the work of tracing them.

“We regret very much that we can be of no service to you in this matter”

“Very respectfully yours,
“Milton Wadbaker,

“Attorney-at-Law
“Lexington, Tennessee.”

CHAPTER 19

JENNIE LEARNS OF A SCHEME

During the walk home and the mealtime following, Jennie noticed a peculiar abstraction of mind quite unlike the usual attentive alertness of her friend. When they were seated on the wide veranda and the silence had become noticeable, Jennie asked suddenly: “What is it, dear? Can’t you tell me?”

Cynthia started, then said with a forced laugh: “Why, it’s nothing, Jennie. I was just thinking, that’s all. Even a featherhead like myself is supposed to think once in a while.”

“Now, dear, I know you are just evading. However, I don’t want you to tell me unless I can be of some help.” “It isn’t that,” Cynthia replied. “I haven’t anything to worry about, really. I was just thinking of you.”

“Of me!” Jennie exclaimed. “Why should thoughts of me keep you in that sort of study all day? Tell me wherein I have been so wicked.”

“You haven’t been wicked, Jennie,” Cynthia answered. Then ended with a laugh. “I am the wicked one.” The girl was quiet a moment, thinking. She was evidently weighing in her mind the advisability of confiding in her friend. Finally she spoke.

“Listen, Jennie,” she said. “I accidentally overheard a conversation today between your father and Squire Parsons. They were talking of you. At first I couldn’t help listening; afterward I listened purposely. You own stock in the Bridgewater Continental Pump Company or something like that, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Jennie replied. “I have some stock in that company. Why do you ask, dear?”

“Well, it seems from the conversation that Squire Parsons also owns some stock in the company, and there are certain things he would like to do if he could get a controlling interest in the company. I gathered that he had tried to get this stock from your mother before she died, but your mother refused to sell it.”

“I know,” Jennie said. “I also know why my mother refused to sell to Squire Parsons. The stock is worthless, it has never paid one cent of dividends, and I believe it never will. Yet Squire Parsons never shall have it. He had just as well give up his plans. He outlined his plans to my mother, and she told him that while he might make some money out of it, others would lose by it, and she neither would be a party to it, nor sell her stock for that purpose.” “If the stock is practically worthless,” Cynthia commented, “I can’t see why he should have any difficulty in buying all he wants from others. I wouldn’t think all the stockholders would be as conscientious as your mother was about it.”

“There are only four stockholders,” Jennie said, “two men living in Bridgewater, Squire Parsons, and myself. Those two men firmly believe that some day they can make the business pay. He can’t buy their stock, and as it stands, he neither can buy nor control mine. He only wants to get his own money back with as much more as would be advisable. He doesn’t plan to operate the company and get his returns, legitimately. If he can get control, boost the capital stock and sell it including his own, then he can drop out and let the new stockholders contend with the difficulties of operating and marketing. He would have his money out of it, but they would find their money uselessly invested.”

“Is that the reason you will not sell to your father?”

“I cannot sell to father,” Jennie answered. “Mother knew that father would take up with Squire Parson’s schemes. She never really owned the stock. It belonged to my grandmother. She was going to give it to my mother at the time Squire Parsons first came to see her about it. Mother went straight to grandmother and had her will it to me, with the provision that if I ever should try to sell it to any person, the stock would revert to the one now owning the majority of stock in the company.”

“Did your mother do that?” Cynthia asked incredulously.

“Indeed she did,” Jennie answered with a tinge of pride in her voice, “Mother knew that company would never pay out. Squire Parsons knows it, too. His is only a scheme to make some money at somebody else’s expense. Mother was too clever for them.”

“But Jennie, they have thought of a way round that,” Cynthia returned. “Squire Parsons suggested it. You see, in this state if you are married, your husband has practically the control of your property.”

“Cynthia!”

“Yes, Jennie, that’s what they plan. You see, Henry Parsons is coming home soon. If you and he should marry,

he could go to the stockholders' meetings and cast your vote, and in that way they could control the majority of the stock."

"Cynthia Brown, what are you telling me?" Jennie asked unbelievably.

"That's what they were saying, Jennie," Cynthia reaffirmed. "I heard it all distinctly. I was in the stockroom back of your father's private office, looking for a piece of goods that is practically out of stock. You know there is seldom anyone in there. The kitten which plays around the factory had followed me in and had run back under the stairway behind your father's office. I knew if I locked him in that room he would starve, so I crept back under there to get him out. It's a small place, you know, and has the dust of ages in it. You may guess that I was surprised to find I could hear every word that was said in the private office. At first I was quiet, afraid to move for fear of being heard. Afterward, as I told you, I listened purposely."

"Well, well," Jennie murmured.

"You see, Jennie, they think it would be to your advantage. They think you will marry somebody and that Henry Parsons is the only young man here who is of your station in life. They said that, so you see they are not trying to harm you, as they see it."

"No," Jennie said meditatively, "not as they see it."

"Well, that is all," Cynthia continued. "I don't know why it should have worried me so, but somehow I felt they were plotting against you. At the same time I knew they thought they were planning for you."

"Yes, dear, they are not to blame, but I am glad you told me," Jennie said. "However, I think they have their planning all for nothing. I don't think Henry Parsons will take to the plan in the least. You know in school he and I were not the chums we might have been." Jennie laughed at the recollection of their school-day quarrels.

"Listen, Jennie," Cynthia said. "Henry Parsons would have been a man worth knowing had he been permitted to grow up naturally. He may be as bad as his parents and their foolish wealth have tried to make him, but I don't believe it. He would never stoop to marrying any woman because there was money to be gained by doing so. His father knows that. You mark my words. Henry will never know about that part of it until afterwards. They know full well that if they throw you and Henry together he just couldn't help—well, they think he would—"

"Cynthia," Jennie's laugh rang out gayly, "I'm sure he wouldn't. Everybody doesn't see me through your eyes, dear."

"But, Jennie, you are beautiful, and they are right. You are the only one of his station here," There was just a touch of sadness in Cynthia's voice.

"Station!" Jennie laid special emphasis on the word. "Cynthia, there is only one station by which 'station' can be measured and that is not money or social position. Character is the only standard, and I know many of my station in that respect and many above it."

"That's not the world's system of measuring station, Jennie."

"Nevertheless," Jennie laughed, "I think I can manage my father and Squire Parsons. I don't think I will have the least trouble there. And as for Henry Parsons, I seem to remember that a certain little flax-haired girl was his special chum and favorite. Perhaps he may measure station by my system, Cynthia." Cynthia's eyes fell, and a slow flush spread over her face.

"You don't think I had any such motive as that in telling you what I have, do you, Jennie?" she asked. "You know that looking after mother will be my work in life, don't you?"

"Oh, Cynthia, dear," Jennie said contritely, "I was only joking. You know I didn't mean that, don't you?"

"Of course," Cynthia answered, a smile once more bringing the dimples to her cheeks. "I know you better than that."

"A note for you, miss."

The maid appeared and extended the tray to Jennie. She took from it the missive and tore it open. "Oh!" she said, "it's from the man with the gowns. He says he can't show me his line until tomorrow afternoon. Can't you manage to come over and help me choose some dresses, Cynthia? I know your judgment is better than my own." "I'm not so sure about that," Cynthia said. "But there never was a woman who could resist looking at a line of dresses, even if she had no thought of buying. I will certainly try to come if the work is still slack at the factory." For the remainder of the afternoon Cynthia chatted and was her own bright self again. Jennie never grew tired of watching the dimples come and go in her cheeks, or her face light up with a passing thought. Her friendship, loyal and true, Jennie knew to be one of the most precious possessions of her life.

CHAPTER 20

A DISCUSSION ON THE RESURRECTION

Well, we are ready once more for our study. I wonder if anyone has succeeded during the day in tearing down our work of last evening." The speaker's voice did not imply fear of the disaster mentioned. "I went over it but it still fits," Bill Lakeman said, tapping the great Book before him. "This is an awfully old bible, but I declare, it seemed new to me today."

"It's always new, Mr. Lakeman," Alfred said earnestly.

The shades of evening coming once more from over the hill found the little group in their favorite spot beneath the honeysuckle. The deep red glow of the sinking sun had not faded from the sky. The balm of the summer evening was in the air, and all nature responded with serenity.

"I was studying before I came," Jennie said, continuing the conversation, "and I was checking over the first verse of the sixth chapter of Hebrews. It mentions the 'resurrection of the dead.' That is a subject I am especially interested in. Did you tell us all there was to tell about it the other evening, or could we learn more?"

"I think we could easily learn more," Alfred answered her, "In fact, Miss Burnside, we have not taken up that subject at all yet. It is what I had planned for tonight. Our subject, 'The mission of Christ,' was closely related to it, yet did not really go into the subject of the 'resurrection of the dead.' We learned then that Christ would restore life. Tonight we will try to learn how completely he restores it."

As each settled in an attitude of attention, Alfred continued:

"We will use our pencils and paper again tonight as we did last night. At the head we will write the subject; 'The resurrection of the dead.' "

"I can't see," Stanley broke in, "how there can be a resurrection of the dead. I had this brought to my attention sometime ago. I was in a home where a man died. His wife was heartbroken, naturally. Well, the minister came and comforted her with these words, 'Your husband's spirit is in heaven.' Now the man hadn't been dead more than an hour, yet I suppose the minister was right. I'm not seriously questioning his statement, but what I can't see is this: if in one hour after he was dead, his spirit was in heaven (the body was buried three days later), how could there be such a thing as a resurrection? To resurrect, as I understand it, means to restore to life. Now if that man was in heaven inside of one hour after he died, his spirit never was dead, was it?"

"No," Alfred answered, "evidently not."

"Then how could it be restored to life?"

A quiet smile crept over Bill Lakeman's face.

"Perhaps we had better look into the matter," Alfred said. "The first question to determine is: Do the spirits go directly to heaven? I mean by that, do they return directly to the presence of God, there to dwell with him throughout eternity? If so, then Stanley is right; there can be no resurrection from the dead as is promised in the Bible. However, we do not want to be controlled by an 'if.' So we will try to reach a conclusion from the teachings of the scriptures. We learned the other night that the spirits of the wicked, those taken captive by Satan, go at death to the prison house. Now we will need to learn where the spirits of the righteous go at death."

"Don't you believe they go to heaven?" Jennie asked.

"Possibly we might call it that," Alfred answered, "but in my mind it would be like a friend of mine, who, when he was married, lived in a little two-room cottage while he saved up money to build his permanent home. Now he called the cottage 'home' while he lived there, but it was not the home in which he looked forward to spending the remainder of his life. "

"Are we to understand by that," Stanley asked, "that you think there is a temporary place to which the spirits of the righteous go?"

"If I answered your question, Stanley, you would have only my opinion of the matter. I think we had better find out what the Bible has to say about it. Mr. Bennett, will you read Luke 16:22?"

" 'And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.' "

"We all know the rest of the story," Alfred went on. "I merely wanted to establish the fact that when the righteous died, there was a place of rest prepared for them, in this instance called 'Abraham's bosom.' Now, let us investigate further. Will you tell us, Mr. Lakeman, from Revelation 2:7, where the tree of life stood?"

Bill Lakeman studied the verse carefully before he answered; then he said :

"In the midst of the paradise of God."

"Very well; now Stanley, 11 Corinthians 12:4."

" 'How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.' "

"Now, Miss Lakeman, Luke 23:43."

“ ‘And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ ”

“How are we going to know,” Stanley asked, “that the paradise mentioned there is not heaven? How are we going to know what this paradise is?”

“The latter part of your question is hard to answer, Stanley,” Alfred said. “It is a subject on which there is very little revealed. However I notice that when you speak of heaven, you always speak of it in the singular number ‘heaven’. In this matter I do not understand that to be correct. Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven. He understood that all the economy of God was not confined to just one place. As for the first part of your question, we know that the paradise mentioned by Christ on the cross was not the place you choose to call ‘heaven.’ If I can understand the Scriptures, the place which you call ‘heaven’ is what the Bible terms the ‘heaven of heavens’ (11 Chronicles 6:18; 1 Kings 8:27), the highest heaven, the dwelling place of God. Paradise is not that ‘heaven,’ for Christ made the statement to the thief, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ Three days later he told Mary that he had not yet ascended to his Father. For this reason I believe the paradise of God to be to the righteous what the prison house is to the wicked, a place where they go to await the resurrection.”

Alfred pulled a little book from his pocket.

“I am going to read to you,” he went on, “the thought expressed better than I am able to express it: “The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their labors and from all care and sorrow.’ ”

“That sounds very well,” Bill Lakeman said, “but what is the object of not letting them go straight to heaven? Why keep them away from God in a place of detention, even if it is as you say “a state of happiness’ ?”

“That is a big question,” Alfred answered him, “so big it embraces practically the whole of the plan of salvation. I think we shall have discovered the answer by the time we have studied a few nights more. For the present, I can say only that man cannot return fully to the presence of God until Christ shall have accomplished his great mission, and he has not yet ‘delivered up the kingdom of God.’

“No, we must wait, like those whom John in his vision saw under the altar, who, he said, had been beheaded for the witness of Christ. They asked the question: ‘ How long, O Lord, holy, and true?’ And the answer came back: ‘Rest yet a little while,’ so even the righteous must wait for that day, when a great voice out of the temple of heaven shall say: ‘It is done.’ ”

“Then you think,” Stanley asked, “that the righteous spirits go to a place of rest, and wait there until Christ has fulfilled his mission?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “until the climax of the plan of ages is reached.”

The soft winds of evening stirred among the trees. The glow faded from the western sky, and the shadows of evening began to fall. The quiet assurance of eternity crept into their hearts as Alfred continued the interrupted study.

“We decided,” he said, “that we would learn, first, when the resurrection would take place. Mr. Lakeman, will you read 1 Thessalonians 4:16?”

The turning of the leaves of Bill Lakeman’s great Bible startled a tiny sparrow which evidently was considering a roosting place for the night among the ivy vines, and it darted away, deciding that the trees of the grove promised greater assurance of unbroken rest.

Bill Lakeman read: “ ‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first.’ ”

“Now, Miss Lakeman, Revelation 20: 5,6.”

“ ‘But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power.’ ”

“These verses teach us,” Alfred commented, “that the resurrection of the righteous or the just, will take place when Christ comes, but the wicked must remain yet in the bands of death until the thousand years are ended.”

“I have been taught,” Jennie Burnside spoke up, “that Christ comes every time a Christian dies, and that constitutes the resurrection. Do you believe, Mr. Stewart, that Christ will come literally?”

“I am glad you brought up that question, Miss Burnside,” Alfred said, “for it is really impossible to study the subject of the resurrection of the dead without considering it in connection with Christ’s coming. I have heard the theory you mentioned, but it does not seem to fit with the teachings of the Bible. From the verses Mr. Lakeman read, we learn that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are told that every eye shall see him. That does not correspond with the deathbed theory does it? The verse Miss Lakeman read teaches us that those who take part in the first resurrection will escape the terrors of the second death. The fact that there will be a first resurrection in which all who are dead in Christ shall rise, is further evidence that the theory you mentioned of a promiscuous resurrection is without foundation in the Scriptures, which teach us plainly that there is a day in which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice.

"I think we have shown that one resurrection at least will take place when Christ comes. Now let us investigate what the resurrection will be. However before we go any further with that phase of the question, I want to recall to our minds some of the facts established in our study regarding the mission of Christ. The death brought into the world by Satan, we learned then, was twofold: physical, that is, separation of the spirit from the body, and spiritual, separation from God. Now Christ's mission was to overcome the works of Satan. Hence, as death, spiritual and physical, was a part of the works of Satan, Christ's mission to be complete must overcome of necessity the physical death as well as the spiritual. The world has overlooked, to a great extent, that fact, although he demonstrated it in the case of his own death. Not only did he overcome the spiritual death and return to his father but he overcame the physical death as well and appeared among men with spirit and body reunited. It was in this complete form he returned to God."

Bill Lakeman tapped the Bible before him meditatively.

"Do you mean to say that all spirits will be united with their bodies in the resurrection?" he asked.

"So the Bible teaches," Alfred answered. "Do you remember the vision of Ezekiel in regard to the valley of dry bones? How the sinews and flesh were commanded to come upon the dry bones, and the spirits, in this case called breath, came into them, and they stood upon their feet, a mighty army?"

"Our minister preached on that subject just last Sunday," Jennie Burnside spoke up. "He told us that was a spiritual picture, meaning the salvation of Israel; that it was fulfilled when they returned from 'Babylonish captivity.'"

Bill Lakeman's smile was eloquent with meaning. "Not much difference," he murmured, "'Between an infidel and a preacher. 'The infidel sets aside the Bible; the preacher spiritualizes it away.' Foolish Bill Lakeman! He thought he talked to himself.

Inwardly amused, Alfred made no comment on the old man's spoken thought. He turned instead and addressed himself to Jennie.

"That could hardly be true," he said, "when viewed in connection with the 12th. and 13th. verses of this 37th. chapter of Ezekiel, which reads: 'Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.' That's plain enough. I don't see why any man should try to set it aside."

"I suppose they would say," Bill Lakeman said, with just a hint of the old hardness in his voice, "that is a figure of speech also, and the grave mentioned there merely refers to their captivity."

"I know that is what they would say," Alfred answered, "but that will scarcely hold together either. The eleventh verse tells us that those bones represented 'the whole house of Israel.' Now it was only a very small portion of the kingdom of Judah, which at its best was only about three of the tribes of Israel, that ever did return from captivity. The kingdom of Israel was never in captivity to Babylon, and never returned from a previous captivity. So his explanation will not fit, any way you apply it. There is only one way in which the whole house of Israel ever can be brought to their own land, and that is in the way the Lord says he intends to do it- 'I will open your graves, O my people, and bring you up out of your graves.'" Stanley's eyes sparkled, and he leaned forward, listening intently. Even John Bennett seemed to wait anxiously for the next word.

"Besides," Alfred Stewart went on, "if that evidence is not strong enough, we will look at Daniel 12:2. Stanley, read it."

Stanley dropped his eyes from the speaker's face to the book before him and read: "'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.'" " 'Them that sleep in the dust of the earth,'" Alfred quoted after him. "Now for another."

Bill Lakeman glanced at Stanley, but that young man had his entire attention fixed on the young preacher before him. Alfred's fighting spirit was aroused; his sentences came crisp and distinct, as though he would attack all the error with which the ages had surrounded the beautiful truths of the gospel, often, as was the case before him, almost submerging them.

"Mr. Bennett, read Job 19: 23-27."

John Bennett had in some manner learned to find his own passages and no longer needed Jennie's assistance. He found the place quickly.

" 'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.' "

"Job understood," Alfred went on, "that although his body faded away in decay, yet he should see God in the flesh. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' He knew that the great Redeemer of mankind would overcome death and

decay, and he should see God in his flesh. No wonder he rejoiced. No wonder he wanted his words to be written with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever. Perhaps, “again the speaker’s voice took on its note of sadness, “perhaps he knew that the time would come when those who professed to believe would deny. “That is not all,” the speaker continued; “One of the prophets of God makes it even stronger. Miss Burnside, will you read Isaiah 26:19?”

Jennie, whose attention had been quite as rapt as that of Stanley Lakeman, drew a short, quick breath. Yet she read in tones clear and smooth.

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise,” Alfred quoted once more. “Now I’d like to see them spiritualize that away!” Once more the shadow came on his face, and the burden of the world’s darkness on his heart. “But I’d a good deal rather see them look it in the face like men.”

“Well, boy,” Bill Lakeman said, “perhaps they are not to blame after all. They don’t understand, themselves, consequently they can’t explain to others.”

“I know that’s true,” Alfred answered, “and, although I allow myself to speak hastily sometimes, my sympathy is really with them. If it were not for the fact that this continual spiritualizing away those things so plainly taught in the Scriptures, is making one infidel to almost every convert, an the infidel is, in so many cases, the thinking, questioning man, it would not be so serious. Mr. Lakeman, you would be surprised to know how many doubters I find, even among men whose names appear on church books. I can’t help admitting that it makes me sad, at times.”

“I know it, boy; I know it,” Bill Lakeman returned.

“Now that verse,” Alfred went on, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.’ How could language be plainer? The closing sentence, “The earth shall cast out the dead,’ is a positive declaration It leaves no chance to do other than reject or accept it.”

Alfred was quiet a moment and then continued, “I had an experience once which amused me. I was in the habit of attending the prayer meetings of a popular church. One evening during the course of the meeting, a young man arose and asked the question; ‘Will our bodies be resurrected?’

“It seemed that was a question that had bothered him for some time. The leader, a big burly fellow, answered, ‘No! When I am through with this old body, thank God, I expect to lay it aside and never be hampered with it again.’

“Think of it, ‘this old body’ as he put it- the most wonderful, the climax of all of God’s physical creations- God’s greatest physical gift to man, esteemed so lightly!

“Well, I thought I would give him a question or two, so I asked: ‘When a man dies, where does his spirit go?’ “His answer came promptly, just as I expected it would:

“‘Back to God who gave it.’

“Does the spirit ever go to the grave?’ I asked again.

“‘No, indeed!’ he answered, ‘we bury the body in the grave, but the spirit goes to God. The spirit is never in the grave.’

“Then, ‘I asked, ‘if the body only is in the grave, what comes out when the graves are opened as the Bible says they will be?’ “ Bill Lakeman laughed heartily. “And what did he say to that?” he asked. “That must have given him something to think about.”

“‘Oh, he said, ‘we shouldn’t study too deeply into these questions.’ And he promptly closed the meeting, although the time was not half taken up.”

“That’s just the trouble,” Bill Lakeman said; “afraid to look the question honestly in the face. And yet, young men such as you mentioned, come to such people for information and get husks as their reward.”

“That’s the sad part of it,” Alfred answered.

“If that man ever had studied anything about his body,” Stanley said, “he never would have made such a remark about it. The body of man is truly a wonderful creation, and if man did not abuse it so much, it would be more wonderful still. However I would like to ask you some questions: If the body is to be resurrected, will it be the same body we have now? In the resurrection, will I have the same hands I have now? And what about the man who dies a cripple? Will he also be a cripple in the resurrection?”

“Not so fast,” Alfred laughed, then seriously; “Before we study the Scriptures on the subject, I would like to ask you a question, Stanley. If you live to be fifty years of age, do you expect to have these identical hands? I mean by that, do you expect the same flesh and bone which now compose them to do so then?”

“No,” Stanley answered, “the natural changes of the body probably will have changed it all by that time. I see what you are trying to say. But what I wanted to ask is this: if I were to die this minute would I come forth in the resurrection with the same flesh I now have?”

“We’ll investigate that point,” Alfred answered: “1 Corinthians 15: 35-38 may help us out. You may read it, Stanley.”

“‘But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.’”

“Paul answered your question in the negative, Stanley. It is not necessarily the same flesh which comes from the grave when the grave is opened. That flesh may have withered away. But the same Creator who created man first from the dust of the earth can bring those dissolved elements together again and form them anew. Paul carries it even further. It would seem that our life here determines to a great extent what the condition of our resurrected body will be, for he goes on in the fortieth verse: ‘There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial.’ Now, Paul, when he makes this statement, is discussing the body which will come forth. I would gather from this, that those who attain to the celestial glory which he mentions in the next verse, will be permitted to enjoy a more glorious body than those who attain only to the terrestrial. The thought might be carried even further. It is just possible that those who attain to the glory mentioned in verse forty-one as the glory of the stars, will not be able to enjoy the glory of being of those of the terrestrial.”

“That seems reasonable,” Bill Lakeman said.

“Paul throws still more light on the subject,” Alfred said. “Miss Lakeman, will you read verses 41 to 44?”

“‘There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star different from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’”

“Do you understand, Stanley, that although the body which we lay in the grave is truly wonderful, and a great blessing from God, yet the body which he shall bring forth out of the grave is infinitely more wonderful?”

“Yes,” Stanley said, “it would seem so.”

“In this connection,” Alfred continued, “I would like to consider 11 Corinthians 5:17. Miss Burnside, will you read it?”

“‘Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.’”

“Now I would like also to hear Job 33:25. Mr. Lakeman, will you read?”

“‘His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s; he shall return to the days of his youth.’”

Bill Lakeman had been following these passages of Scripture with unusual interest.

“To me,” Alfred went on, “these verses teach a beautiful thought. In the resurrection there will be no weak bodies. Laid away in weakness, ‘it shall be raised in power.’ This would answer your question in regard to cripples, Stanley, or those maimed in any manner. Furthermore, it teaches us this: those who are laid away in feeble old age will come forth in the power of their manhood. ‘He shall return to the days of his youth,’ and for the flesh which is seamed and wrinkled with age, he will be given ‘flesh’ that is ‘fresher than a child’s.’ Isaiah, evidently speaking of the same thing, says there shall be no more an old man who has not fulfilled his days. Old age, bodily blemishes, and all other undesirable conditions will have vanished.”

“Young man,” Bill Lakeman said, “the Bible as you have made it appear to us, holds out comfort and correction for every wrong condition in life. I am an old man, but I thank God tonight that I have been able to understand him better because of the things you have taught us. I like that thought. What comfort would it be to live to see old age and to know we would carry an aged body throughout eternity? I would rather commit suicide in the prime of life than to do that. But Mr. Stewart, I have run up against a snag which I would like for you to uproot. Back here in 1 Corinthians, 15th chapter, 50th verse, I read this:

“‘Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.’”

“That is a snag, isn’t it?” Alfred asked, laughing. “We will go on and study the rest of the chapter and then come back to your snag, Mr. Lakeman, and hitch all hands on for a mighty pull.” Then he continued seriously, “I think there is surely some harmony between that passage of Scripture and the teachings of the rest of the Bible. Stanley, will you read verse 51?”

“‘Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.’”

“Now, Mr. Bennett, the next verse.”

“‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.’”

“Now, Mr. Bennett, the next verse.”

“ ‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.’ “

“Now, Miss Burnside, verse 53.”

“ ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.’ “

“ ‘I can’t tell you, Mr. Lakeman, what the difference will be between the flesh of immortality and the flesh of our present mortal condition. Evidently it will differ from our present combination of flesh and blood. I can’t say in just what manner. Then we notice that the Apostle John admits having doubts, for he says: ‘It does not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.’ “

“However, this much we do know; Christ himself went into heaven, taking with him the same body with which he was resurrected. It bore the spear hole in his side, the prints of the nails in his hands. When he comes again the second time, he will show to Israel, according to the Scriptures, those evidences of his identity. His flesh is in the kingdom of heaven; his blood was spilled on Calvary. So I am content as was John, ‘ It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.’ Now just one more, Mr. Lakeman; will you read Philippians 3: 20,21?”

“ ‘For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.’ “

And so the evening ended in the holy hush of night. They separated quietly, thoughtfully. Yet in the heart of each was a prayer of thankfulness for the mighty fullness of the gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER 21

THE SELECTION OF TWO DRESSES

“Is it becoming?” Jennie asked the salesman, as she stood before the mirror, arrayed in a gown of gorgeous design, which in its cunning deception gave the beholder the impression of simple, unassuming grace and quiet dignity.

“ ‘Very, miss, very, “ the salesman responded warmly. Jennie looked at her friend for confirmation. Cynthia’s eyes were bright with enthusiasm.

“You are beautiful in it, Jennie,” she said truthfully.

Jennie looked the gown over critically.

“Haven’t you something more stylish?” she asked.

“That would hardly be possible, “ the salesman returned, “unless I would show you some of the freak styles, which are not at all suitable for you. Indeed, if we would dare say so, they are hardly suitable for anyone, but we must have them to satisfy a certain portion of our trade.”

“I would like to see them, I think,” Jennie said. “And in the meantime, perhaps if I could see this on someone else, it might help me make a decision. If Miss Brown could try it on.”

“Certainly, Miss Burnside, that will work fine. We will just use the young lady as a model,” the salesman laughed pleasantly. “An attractive model is half the sale,” he added, as he spread the gowns before Jennie for inspection and smiled at Cynthia’s confusion.

“Why, they are – “ Jennie started, when her eyes fell on the gowns before her, but checked herself. “I’ll try this one on, please.”

When she had left the room to make the necessary change, the salesman stared after her unbelievably. He was something of a student of human nature and had considered himself a character reader. In this case he found himself floundering in uncertainty. For Jennie had carried with her the extremest of the extreme- the very gown the salesman always folded away with a grunt of disgust and a mental picture of a woman he would expect to wear it, and the picture was not alluring. Moreover, Jennie was not of that type, therefore the salesman was puzzled.

When a moment later Jennie stood before the full length mirror in the sample room, she could scarcely repress a smile at her own reflection. The salesman stood back, venturing neither criticism nor approval.

“Oh Jennie!” Cynthia exclaimed as she appeared in the doorway.

But Jennie for the moment had forgotten herself. She was looking at Cynthia, drinking in the full revelation of the girl’s beauty. From the golden-brown curls piled high on her head, to the graceful folds of the skirt as it brushed the floor, every line, every feature, denoted grace and beauty. It was not the beauty of the gown alone, but rather the exquisite harmony of the whole, which produced the effect. In fact, Jennie thought as she looked at her, one quickly

forgot the gown, swallowed up as it was in the personality of the woman.

Not so with Cynthia. There was an expression almost of pain in her deep blue eyes, as she regarded Jennie.

"That will never do Jennie," she remonstrated. "It's very unbecoming to you."

"But it's stylish, isn't it?" Jennie appealed to the salesman.

"Very, miss," he returned indifferently. "I have nothing more stylish."

"I'll take it," she said. "Yes, I think I will take the one Miss Brown is wearing as well."

The salesman looked at her keenly. Such contrasting taste in one individual. Surely, women were past finding out.

"Now, one thing more," Jennie said: "will you show me some attractive riding habits, please?"

The alacrity with which the little man sprang to do her bidding betrayed the fact that she had touched upon his favorite hobby. Riding, and all that pertained to it, aroused all the latent enthusiasm of his nature.

"We have some excellent habits," he said as he laid them before her, "one, I think, that would be most becoming to you, miss."

And his judgment was not wrong. Jennie could not have been a woman had she not gazed longer at her own reflection in the mirror than was absolutely necessary to decision. Indeed, the instant her eyes fell upon that reflection the truthful mirror presented, the decision was made. Yet she gazed unbelievably. The roguish tilt of the hat, which sat lightly over her dark hair, the daintiness of the riding gloves, the personality of the riding whip which hung from her arm, all combined to make the picture which held her gaze. She stood gazing with surprised eyes for one long minute; then a slow blush spread over her face. She had realized suddenly why she wanted that habit; knew that the coming among them of a stranger had prompted the impulse to appear to better advantage than she had hitherto thought necessary. Yet it is possible that had the stranger known of that blush he might not have been seriously displeased. He even might have dropped his head to hid a certain glad light in his own eyes, or a smile that would come to his lips. but he did not know, and he certainly could not guess that his presence in Leesburg could possibly be the cause of any unusual extravagance on the part of any of her citizens.

When the business of the afternoon had been transacted and the girls were once more alone, Cynthia threw her arms around her friend.

"That riding habit and the one dress are beautiful, Jennie," she said, "quite the most beautiful I have seen."

"That 'one dress' is not mine, dear lady," Jennie answered.

"Not yours-!"

Jennie laughed gayly and pressed Cynthia's arm playfully.

"You unsuspecting dear! And tomorrow is your birthday," she said. "Oh, I was so much afraid you would catch on."

"But, Jennie," Cynthia faltered, "I- I couldn't accept such a present, really. Besides, what would a factory girl like myself do with a dress like that?"

"Listen, dear," Jennie said gently, "that is just the kind of a dress a factory girl like yourself does want, because you can appear well dressed in it and at the same time not appear overdressed. I gave you that dress, because you, of all my girl friends, have not let the fact that my father is reputed to be wealthy interfere with our friendship. I know you, Cynthia. A friend like you is one of the rarest possessions on earth. You would be my friend just the same, no matter what would overtake me in life. Your friendship would be true through joy or sorrow, honor or disgrace. So I want you, dear, to accept the dress and wear it unhesitatingly."

Cynthia's eyes filled with tears, and she ran her hands lovingly over the folds of the gown. The very silence spoke her appreciation more eloquently than words ever could have done. And Jennie understood, for Jennie, too, was a woman.

CHAPTER 22

THE EARTH'S GREAT DAY

"Stewart," Bill Lakeman called, "come here." Alfred looked up from a point where he leaned out over the brook in a vain attempt to catch a wiry little minnow which was trying to make the rapids. It darted playfully away from him, found a rift among the rocks, and succeeded in reaching the still waters above.

Alfred laughed at his failure and started up the bank to where Bill Lakeman sat under a great maple. As he did so, crowding through a tall bunch of grasses, He was attracted by a noise at his feet, followed by a whirl of wings.

"A quail's nest, Mr. Lakeman," he called as he stopped to investigate the disturbance.

The old man arose, pressed his way through the grass to Alfred's side, and leaning over, peered with Alfred

into the nest below.

“Full of eggs,” he said; “she’ll be sitting soon.

“You never would have found it,” he continued as he rose to his feet, “if you hadn’t stepped almost into it. That bird’s might particular who finds her nest.

“Well, come on back, birdie,” he added, looking out to where the little hen ran to and fro among the grasses, trying vainly to attract their attention from the place. “We’ll not hurt your nest, and we understand these antics.” He carefully rearranged the grasses, it seemed to Alfred, just as they had found them.

“This arrangement won’t fool the bird either,” he said. “Man can’t put his hand down on nature, ever, and have it the same after he’s gone.”

When they reached the tree under which Bill Lakeman had been sitting, Alfred threw his crutch to the ground and stretched himself luxuriously on the bed of soft mosses. A feeling of rest and quiet stole over him. He looked up high among the leaves over his head, and discovered there, wedged securely between the branches, a tiny bird’s nest. Stealing cautiously between the leaves, a pewit poised for a moment on the edge of the nest, deposited the morsel she was carrying in the open mouth of her young, and darted away again. Farther out on the edge of another limb a golden oriole had hung her nest, and Alfred felt himself carried in fancy back to boyhood when these things had formed the most joyous associations of his life. The tree stood on a little peninsula overlooking the brook, and he closed his eyes and listened to the melody of the waters as they jumped from rock to rock of the rapids.

It was one of those beautiful, secluded spots of nature, and Alfred knew instinctively that he had stumbled upon Bill Lakeman’s favorite retreat as he had found Stanley’s a few evenings before. He noticed Bill Lakeman had been reading his Bible.

“What do you think of this bed of moss?” the old man asked, running his eyes over the velvet-like smoothness of its surface.

“I never saw one more beautiful,” Alfred answered truthfully.

“Look,” Bill Lakeman pulled from his pocket a small, round glass and held it before Alfred’s eyes. Instantly the moss bed beneath was transformed into a veritable bed of flowers, each tiny stem a complete plant in itself, topped by a single yellow flower, proudly holding up its head, as though it knew that, while too small to be seen and noticed, it was needed to add to the beauty of the whole. It reminded Alfred of some lives he had seen, quiet, unpretentious, scarcely noticeable in themselves: yet he realized it was such lives which formed the smoothness and beauty of the world.

He reached his hand for the glass which the old man surrendered willingly, and looked long at the flowers beneath him. He noticed in the center of each tiny yellow flower a single drop of red; and knew that other beauties yet lay hidden by their very minuteness beyond the power of the glass in his hand. As usual under these circumstances, his mind went out to the Creator who had planned and fashioned these wonderful things of nature, more wonderful because man could neither see nor understand.

Unconsciously he lifted his eyes from the moss at his feet to the sky above, and the old man following him with his keen, kindly eyes, smiled. How easy to follow his thoughts! Yet today Bill Lakeman himself lifted his eyes to heaven and felt the reality of the existence of that great God whom Alfred loved, and Bill Lakeman felt his own heart warm toward the God he had always doubted and misunderstood. His gaze once more fell to the flowers at his feet, and he felt he knew that God better because of having loved his creations.

“They’re perfect,” Alfred said, viewing the flowers once more through the glass in his hand. He lifted his eyes thoughtfully to Bill Lakeman’s face.

“Man’s sight is never clear enough to see the things of God,” he remarked. “We are never able to see them in all their completeness. Paul’s statement that now we see ‘through a glass darkly’ fits everywhere, doesn’t it? I can’t see all the beauty of this moss bed, not even with the help of this glass. Part of it is still hidden. I think it must be the same in spiritual things. Even with the help of the Spirit of God, which he has given us as a glass to aid our spiritual sight, we still only ‘see in part.’ Do you know, Mr. Lakeman, that at times when I get to thinking about it, I feel I am anxious for that time when we shall see face to face, when all these beauties, now hidden from our sight, will be revealed to our perfected vision.”

“Oh boy,” Bill Lakeman laughed, “what would the world be without such dreamers as you? Yet you are right; much of our sight is hidden. We go through life little realizing the beauty of the world we are in. The air we breathe, the sounds we hear, the sights we see are so wonderful that men who have spent their entire lives studying them have only skimmed the surface with their knowledge. Just as it was with your moss bed, there are always greater beauties lying just beyond the reach of our comprehension.” The old man gazed at a patch of blue showing through the leaves above him. Thoughtfully he watched a snowy cloud drift across its surface and out of the range of his vision.

“Do you realize,” he said, facing his companion and bringing into the conversation one of those sudden

changes of thought peculiar to him “that beneath all this ‘hidden beauty,’ as you call it, death lurks? Look here.” Reaching out, he lifted a leaf on a bush growing near. Just beneath, eating away at the heart of the leaf, hung great green worm.

“That isn’t all,” Bill Lakeman went on. “The corn in that field over there looks perfect from here, but fully one-third of it is worthless. Death is everywhere. Look at these hands; why are they seamed and wrinkled? The same answer ; death and decay. There is much of beauty in the world, but just when we begin to forget, death looms up before us, just as prevalent, just as certain as life.”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “ all you have said is true. We are evidently living in the evening time of the earth: that time when the earth waxes old as a garment. But, Mr. Lakeman, if I can understand the Bible, you and I are not today seeing anything of death, disease, and destruction to what the inhabitants of the earth will see before that day of the Lord shall come. Looking around on the world today, we feel to a great extent, perfect safety. But the time will come when that sense of safety will not be felt. Let me see the Bible there.”

Bill Lakeman picked the book up from the mosses at his feet and handed it to Alfred.

“There is one thing taught clearly,” the young man went on as he spread the Bible out on the moss before him, “and that is the great time of destruction, as the end draws near. Paul, in speaking of it, said: ‘This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.’ Jeremiah 23:19,20., puts it like this: ‘Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart; in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.’ Christ himself gives us a picture in Luke 21:25,26. He says that in the generation in which the times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled,’ there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.’ “ “Not a very bright picture, that,” the old man remarked.

“The destruction which shall take place before the day of the Lord shall come will be far-reaching . Listen to this in Joel 1:4,10,11,15,” Alfred continued.

“ ‘That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.....The field is wasted, the land mourned; for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.... ‘Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.’ Christ, speaking of the time, says ‘nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. all these are the beginnings of sorrow.’

“You were right, Mr. Lakeman, a few moments ago; death and destruction are everywhere. Even when we are considering the beauties of the created world we come upon its blight. Yet we learned a few nights ago in our study that these are not the works of God. His it was to give life and beauty; it has remained for the Devil and for man to bring death and destruction. It remains for Christ to bring about a restoration of true life.”

“That’s a nice theory, Stewart,” Bill Lakeman said, “but will the facts bear out the assumption? Now it seems to me that man and the Devil are not responsible for all the destruction there is in the world. There, did you see that? Was it man or the Devil who prompted that fish to dart to the surface and snap up that fly? That was destruction, a part of the destruction that is in the world. Yet God himself must have given that fish a desire to eat flies. Practically all of the life of the world is maintained by the destruction of other life. How do you account for that?”

Alfred smiled assent.

“I’ll have to let the decision go to you for the present, Mr. Lakeman, “ he admitted. Then more seriously, “However, that may be, this time or scene of destruction will end when Christ shall have taken over the ruling of this earth.”

“Just what do you mean by that statement?” Bill Lakeman asked. “Do you mean that Christ and God are not ruling this earth now?”

“Yes, and no,” Alfred answered. “Christ and God most certainly do rule in the affairs of men, yet not in the absolute sense. There are two other agencies also ruling – men and Satan. We cannot overlook that fact.”

“Well, I can’t see,” the old man said, “why God lets man and the Devil stir up so much devilment. Why doesn’t God take the Devil out of the way?”

“I have often thought of that,” Alfred answered, looking thoughtfully up at the canopy of leaves above him. “I have it figured out that it is God’s sense of fairness. He will not be unfair even with the Devil. There will evidently be a time when God can and will do just that. The devils themselves seem to understand it. Do you remember the question they once asked Christ? ‘Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ?’ They knew that there would come a time when the great, just God could say to them in all fairness, ‘ You must no longer torment the children of

men.’ “

“Well, I’ll be glad to see that time come,” Bill Lakeman commented. “Man himself is capable of enough meanness without any help from the Devil.”

They were quiet a moment. Then he continued; “I’d like to know on what you base your assertion that all this destruction will cease when Christ rules. I don’t see where you get such a thought.”

“Do you remember what we read a few moments ago about the destruction of the palmerworm, etc.? That was a picture given of a time just before the day of the Lord shall come. Now listen; this picture follows: I am reading Joel 2:21,22,23.

“ ‘Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.’ “

“That sounds good,” Bill Lakeman. said.

“You mentioned a moment ago,” Alfred went on, “ the destruction among the animal life. But listen. In that day when Christ shall reign over the earth, this condition will prevail. Isaiah 11:6-9 says:

“ ‘The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.’ Say, Mr. Lakeman, how many wolves would you trust among your lambs now?”

“Not any,” the old man smiled.

“Well, it will be different then. ‘ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.’ How’s that?”

The old man had raised himself on his elbow and was regarding Alfred curiously.

“Young man,” he commanded, “let me see that Bible.”

He took the book and carefully reread the passage indicated.

“I thought you must be making that up,” he said as he handed the book back.

“Well, that’s not all,” and Alfred added:

“ ‘And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.’ “

“Do you mean to tell me that this earth will ever see that condition?” the old man asked, incredulously.

“Evidently,” Alfred answered. “This is the way the Lord puts it: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’ “

“Well, I’d like to see it like that,” Bill Lakeman said, “Do you know, it sounds like a fairy tale.”

“It does indeed,” Alfred agreed. “At least it sounds almost too good to be true, in this world where we are accustomed to so much destruction and fear.”

“When do you figure that will be ?” the old man asked again. “After we’re all dead and gone, most likely. But if the earth is ever going to be like that, I’d certainly like to see it.”

“I think the Bible gives us a very close estimate as to when it will be,” Alfred answered. He picked up the book and handed it to his friend. “Read a few passages as I shall give them to you. First, Acts 1:11.”

“ ‘Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’ “ The old man finished and looked expectantly at Alfred.

“Now, Luke 21:27.”

“ ‘And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.’ “

“It is probable, Mr. Lakeman, that we will both be dead before that great day of peace; but if we are among those whom Christ has redeemed, I think we shall enjoy that time. Now read 1 Thessalonians 4:16, please.”

“ ‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.’ “

“Do you mean to show by that,” Bill Lakeman asked, “that even if we are dead, we will be allowed to come back and see the earth like that, after the resurrection?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “in our perfected bodies. That is, if we are fortunate enough to be among the just.

“Well, it’s worth trying for,” the old man commented thoughtfully.

“Now read Psalm 72:7,8.”

“ ‘In his day shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.’ “

The silence of the forest was on them, except for the melody of the water as it sang over the rapids, and the twitter of the birds among the trees. Bill Lakeman raised his eyes and looked off at the line of hills which fringed the valley. But now, he was not seeing the valley as it was but rather in his mind was slowly forming a picture of a

perfected world, a world from which crime, sin, and sorrow had fled, a world where birds sang and were not afraid, where beasts frolicked and did not kill. His heart burned within him as the true significance of that picture came to him, and his voice vibrated with feeling when he spoke.

"It's certainly worth living for," he repeated.

"We were talking awhile ago," Alfred said, "about God putting Satan out of the way. Now let's read about it, from Revelation 20: 1-3.

" 'And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.'

"So you see," Alfred remarked, "God is going to do precisely what you were saying awhile ago that you wondered why he did not do. When that time comes which the devils themselves know of, and speak of as 'the time' the God of heaven will see that they deceive the nations no more.

"A thousand years," Bill Lakeman repeated, "on this earth with Christ; no Devil, no wild animals. Do you know, boy, that's the most wonderful thing you have taught us yet."

He was quiet a moment, then turned to Alfred suddenly. "Say," he said, "doesn't that knock a hole in the teaching that we will spend our eternity in heaven?"

"Yes," Alfred answered, "it knocks at least a thousand years out of that theory. Furthermore, I think a study of the Bible knocks more than a thousand years out of it. In fact, we are not taught in the Bible that we will spend our eternity in heaven. I mean by that, in the skies. Our eternity will be spent principally here on earth. We have just read that we will spend a thousand years here. That is not all. If you should read the balance of the chapter, you would discover that after the thousand years' reign of Christ is ended, Satan will be loosed again for a little season. After this little season is ended, the rest of the dead will be brought forth, and the great day of judgment will take place. Begin again and read it."

" 'And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season. and I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.' "

"That, you see," Alfred said, "is a description of the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the just. From the next verse, tell me what becomes of the rest of the dead."

" 'But the rest of the dead,' " Bill Lakeman continued reading, " 'lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.' "

"When the thousand years are finished," Alfred went on, "and the Devil has once more been loosed for a time, the apostle there goes on to tell us of the great judgment day of God, in which all the dead stand before him for judgment- to be rewarded or condemned according as their works have been.

"Now when the judgment is past and all have received their appointment, the apostle said: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.' Still he does not tell us that we will go off into heaven to dwell, but rather tells us, "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, and I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them ' " (Revelation 21:2,3)

"Well, how do you figure," Bill Lakeman asked, "there will be room on earth for all these people? There have been a lot of people on this earth since the beginning."

"I realize that," Alfred answered. "I have never thought about it a great deal. However, this much I know. This earth, even as it is today, would support a great many more people than are on it, if the proper distribution were made. Also two-thirds of the earth's surface is now taken up with seas and oceans. John tells us that on the new earth there will be no seas. My faith in God is sufficient to believe that if it were necessary, he could and would make the new earth large enough to meet the demands. " Bill Lakeman's eyes wandered thoughtfully away over the cornfield and across the meadow. This time with the eye of a naturalist he saw the beauty of the world around him.

"I can't conceive," he said finally, "what the beauty of the redeemed world would be. Even in its present condition it is full of marvelously beautiful things. But we have been taught so long that we must go off into some ethereal place to spend our eternity, that I can't grow accustomed to the thought of spending it here on earth."

"I'll tell you, Mr. Lakeman," Alfred said, "that was the only thing I ever learned about the gospel of Christ that was a disappointment to me. I must confess that when I learned this world was to be our dwelling place in eternity, I was disappointed. Yet that is what the Bible teaches, and it is what we must believe if we believe it to be the word of God. You see, I have always been a lover of the stars, and the thought of getting near to them was a source of

much delight to me.”

“I can imagine a dreamer like you feeling like that,” Bill Lakeman said, “yet I can’t see really why you should feel that way about it. Suppose you were sent to some other star to spend your eternity. What assurance have you that it would be a more pleasant place to live than our own earth after it was perfected?”

“None whatever,” Alfred answered.

“You have no evidence,” Bill Lakeman went on, “that it would be a more beautiful place, either, have you?”

“No,” said Alfred, “I know that is just a whim. But you see we don’t give up our old ideas easily. Some of them still want to cling. I know that in eternity we must live either on this or some other planet. I never have been one of those who believes that heaven is just some spot off in space where we will fly around throughout all eternity and play a golden harp, with nothing else to do, and nothing to alight on.”

The young man laughed as he continued: “You see, I never was overly industrious, and that always seemed a little too long to fly around in space. I think after the first two or three thousand years, I would like to feel some good old earth under my feet again.”

“Yes, and I too,” the old man agreed. “And I think that after I had done nothing but play a golden harp for one or two thousand years, I’d be ready to say, O Lord, send me back to plowing corn.”

The old man’s laugh was good to hear.

“Yes, sir,” he said, “the Lord can count me in favor of his plan. That suits me better than anything I have heard yet. Jupiter and Neptune might be a good place to spend eternity, but I’ll be mighty well satisfied with the earth when the Lord gets through making it over.”

“I feel this way about it,” Alfred said; “If this earth is as beautiful as it is now, without either God or Christ here, I think I can be satisfied with it when we have them both. Yes, I’m like you, Mr. Lakeman; when I give the matter thought, I am satisfied with the Lord’s arrangement. Do you think that will be a new thought to Stanley? If it is, I have a mind to make it the basis of our study tonight. Do you think you could stand to go over it again?”

“Do it,” the old man said. “I not only could stand it but would enjoy it. Nothing is really learned that is gone over only once. I’m sure both Stanley and Jennie would enjoy it, too. Now, do you see that, young man? That sun is just naturally running a race with itself to get behind the hill. I’ve got milking and a score of other things to do before study time.” Suiting the action to the word, the old man scrambled to his feet. Alfred, owing to his disablement, was somewhat slower.

“Let me milk for you, Mr. Lakeman?” he asked. Bill Lakeman looked at him in surprise.

“Can you milk?” he questioned. “Now do you know, I had you figured out to be one of those city men who has never seen a milk bucket.”

“Well, I have,” Alfred affirmed laughingly. “It has been a number of years, but I think I could still manage. For the ten years prior to the time I went into the mission field, I was in a bank in the city, keeping books. But I still remember my days on the farm. In fact, haying time never comes but I feel as if I wanted to get out and pitch hay once more.”

“And feel it under your feet,” Bill Lakeman commented, “when you tramp it down on the load, and smell it when it is being cut.”

“It all goes together,” Alfred said. “I don’t think the man ever lived who was once a farmer, who could forget those things and not want to go back to them occasionally.”

During the conversation they were walking slowly toward the house. Bill Lakeman paused suddenly in the path and faced Alfred.

“Do you suppose,” he asked, “that in that time we read about, we will plow, sow, and thresh?”

“I don’t know,” Alfred answered, “but it seems to me that when those lions we read about eat straw like the ox, somebody must do some threshing. Don’t you think so?”

“It looks that way, boy; it looks that way,” the old man said reflectively.

CHAPTER 23

HENRY PARSONS RETURNS

“Aunt Maria,” Jennie said, “Henry Parsons is home, and father has invited him to dinner. Will you tell the girl in the kitchen to see that we have a nice dinner? You may tell her also, auntie, that we enjoyed the salad she made the other evening, very much. She may serve it again if she cares to.”

“Law, Mis’ Jennie, you sure will make dat girl happy. She so proud of dat air salad, she’d work hard all day, just ‘cause you praise it.”

“Indeed, I think she deserves the praise. Not many people can make such salad. I mean to have her teach me.”
“Now, Mis’ Jennie, don’ you come pesterin’ about de kitchen, spilin’ yo’ hands an’ yo’ complexion. Let niggers an’ po’ white trash do dat kin’ o’ work. Yo’ daddy always gin yo’ plenty. Yo’ stay outen de kitchen.”

“Well, auntie,” Jennie laughed, “I might be ‘po’ white trash myself some day, and it will be nice to know all those things. Yes, I think I must know how to make that salad.” Then more seriously, “If Tom is in the kitchen when yo go out, auntie tell him I would like to see him.”

A moment later, Tom, who acted as general caretaker of the grounds around the Burnside residence, as well as stable boy, stood before Jennie, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot. He was evidently much more at home among his flowers or about the barn than in the more elaborate elegance of the house.

“We will want a bouquet of your most beautiful roses for the dining table, Tom,” Jennie said. “Those you arranged for us last were very artistic. You may also choose the flowers for these vases.”

She designated two beautiful creations which stood empty on the mantel.

Tom’s eyes lighted. He gave one glance at the vases, taking in the entire surroundings, and his decision was made. Unconsciously he was an artist. In that brief survey he did not see the empty vases, but nodding above their containers of blue and gold, great white chrysanthemums with lifted faces seemed to laugh at their own reflection in the mirror behind them.

“When you have done that,” Jennie went on, “I want you to drive over and bring Cynthia down. Tell her I want her to take her lesson this morning. Also tell her, Tom, that I would be glad if she would wear her new gown. I want to see it on her once more. Can you remember all that?” Yes, Miss Jennie,” he said, and left her.

When she was alone, Jennie chided herself. “Oh, duplicity, “ she murmured, laughing silently, yet in her eyes there was no repentance.

.....

“Now, if you will stand out there just a little farther, Cynthia. ‘There, you see the art of standing is quite as important as any other part of the singing. Face this way, please; now we will try that arpeggio once more.” Cynthia’s soft, full voice took up the run. The ascension was made smoothly, while the voice came out on the high note clear and free. However, on the descending scale Jennie’s critical ear detected a slight break.

“Once more, Cynthia, “ she directed. “Place the notes very carefully and don’t lose control.”

Cynthia tried again, this time with perfect success. She took the run, both ascending and descending, with perfect balance of voice. The full round tones filled the whole house with their harmony. Not the house only, for a young man who was just at that moment ascending the front steps stopped in his ascent, hoping once more to hear the wonderful melody of that voice.

A glance in the mirror had told Jennie he was coming, and she congratulated herself upon the selection of that especially melodious arpeggio which so suited Cynthia’s voice. Jennie was more than pleased when she saw him slip quietly into a chair out of the observation of the singer whose unconscious profile was turned toward him, and whose eyes, imbued with the spirit of her work, looked off into the distance. Jennie struck very softly a few opening chords.

“Nothing classic today, Cynthia. Just this old song that I love.”

What was it that swept Cynthia into the past? Back in heart to the old days when there had been no distinction of class brought about by wealth, back to the time when the widow and her daughter had forgotten their poverty in the warmth of the love of their friends, when friend met friend on their merits, and social position did not exist. Whatever it was touched the tones with sadness and added a hundredfold to their appeal.

“Oh! don’t you remember sweet Alice,
Ben Bolt, Sweet Alice with hair so brown;
Who wept with delight when you gave her a smile,
And trembled with fear at your frown?
In the old churchyard in the valley, Ben Bolt,
In the corner, obscure and alone,
They have fitted a slab of granite so gray,
And sweet Alice lies under the stone.”

The workers in the kitchen stopped their work to listen. The lawn mower which had been clattering about the grounds was silent, while Tom leaned on its handle.

But the one most affected was the world-weary man on the front porch. And, strange as it may seem, he had not recognized himself as world-weary, until the strains of that old song fell upon his ears, and he, too, had been carried

into the past.

As the song progressed he was no longer the rich man's son, pampered and spoiled, weighted down by life's unnatural affections, but a barefoot urchin playing on the lake shore and among the trees. He could see himself once more climbing among the ruins of the old gristmill which stood around the bend in the road. And always by his side, constant playmate and companion, was a flaxen-haired girl, the daughter of the widow who had lived across the way. By a strange flight of imagination the flaxen-haired girl became the sweet Alice of the song, while he was the Ben Bolt.

Verse by verse, as the words fell from the singer's lips, the man was carried back, back over the days of his childhood before the world had left its mark on his face; and a great heart hunger came to him, hunger for the clean, free days of the past, and for the old companionship which had been so constant and true. He realized suddenly that the influence of that companionship had stayed with him through the years, knew that the purity of the past had somehow kept him for the depths.

The widow's cottage no longer stood across the way. His father had bought it, not wishing a blot on the landscape. 'and he had lost his "sweet Alice." She was swallowed up somewhere in the world. Unless the man suddenly felt that all that was worth-while in his life was gone. Strange power of suggestion ! In his mind was a picture of a marble slab in the churchyard where they had so often played. In fancy he drew near and read the name thereon.

With the pain of that thought, he sprang to his feet and ended the song abruptly with his ring. When the maid admitted him into the room, Jennie occupied her seat at the piano and Cynthia still stood where she had been singing. As she turned toward him, Henry Parsons stopped short in astonishment, for there before him stood his companion of the old days, his sweet Alice of the song. He had thought of her as gone with the past, but as she stood before him, beautiful in her maturity, a great wave of gladness swept over him and he unconsciously extended his hand.

Jennie came to the rescue. She had stolen a sly glance at her friend and saw the color slowly fade from her cheeks, and Jennie felt the first wave of repentance sweep over her . She almost regretted that she had secretly planned to have Cynthia with her when he should come. With perfect composure she advanced to extend to him the cordial welcome due him. As she gave him her hand and looked into his face, she realized that the years of his absence had transformed him from an uncouth lad into a polished man of the world. He was a handsome man, much as his father had been handsome before him- not of feature or form, but rather from a strange suppression of power. Jennie felt he was born to be a leader of men, a decided influence for either good or evil. There was that about him which Jennie could not define. It was not particularly dissipation, hardly deep enough for that, yet a vague something which savored of a too intimate knowledge of the world. Unconsciously she drew from him.

"You will remember Cynthia also, I think, Henry," she spoke.

"Yes, indeed," he responded warmly.

Cynthia gave him her hand shyly. She was suddenly very much afraid. Jennie knew that in the future she might wear what she pleased, becoming or otherwise, She would get only friendly consideration from Henry Parsons. While Cynthia, true to her kind, did not see the stamp of the world on his face; she saw only the man he might have been, the man she loyally believed he would be, and was content.

CHAPTER 24

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

When all were in their places once more beneath the honeysuckle, and Alfred had offered prayer with which they began their study, he stood beside the chair before them and said: "The matter of choosing a subject for our study tonight has been something of a puzzle to me. One thing, however, seems to impress itself on my mind. That is the church which Christ established while here on earth."

"I was thinking of asking you to talk about the church," Bill Lakeman said. "I have been thinking about it all afternoon. There's a lot I want to ask about the church."

"There is one thing we are going to do tonight," Alfred went on, "and that is, take several texts. I will read the first one; it is found in the first part of the second verse of the ninth chapter of Luke.

" 'And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God.' That will be my text.

"Now, Mr. Lakeman, you may read Luke 16:16."

" 'Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.' "

“That, Mr. Lakeman, will be your text. Yours, Stanley, will be found in the first sentence of 1 Corinthians 12:13.”

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

“Miss Lakeman, you may take 1 Peter 2:5, the first sentence.”

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.”

“Mr. Bennett, the last sentence in 1 Corinthians 3:9.”

“Ye are God’s building.”

“Now let us keep our Bibles marked, so we can turn to our texts easily. We will now proceed with our study.” Stooping, he lifted from the ground a small, round case, from which he took several short bits of metal. Pulling them apart here, adjusting there, he stood before them a large rack. Delving once more into the case he brought out and commenced unfolding sheets of paper. Stanley’s curiosity overbalanced his control.

“What are you going to do with that thing?” he asked.

“This will be used in our study,” Alfred answered laughingly as he attached the paper to the rack. Then from his pocket he produced a piece of crayon and stood before them ready for action.

“Now we want,” he said, “to find out as much as we can about the church as left here by Christ, As it is always best to begin at the bottom and work up, we will look first to the foundation and cornerstone. To this end, Miss Burnside, will you read 1 Peter 2:6?”

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

“Our next passage will be found in Ephesians 2:19-22. Mr. Lakeman, read it, please.”

“Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

“We have learned,” Alfred commented, “that the most important personage in the temple is Jesus Christ, ‘in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple.’”

As Alfred spoke he had been busy with his crayon on the paper before him. When the words were finished, he stepped back, revealing to their view the result of his peculiar markings.

“Now, Stanley, from the verse your father read, what did you learn about the foundation?”

“It says ‘built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.’”

“Very well.” Alfred made a few more marks.

“We have now the foundation and cornerstone. Let us look further and see what is builded into the building. Miss Lakeman, will you read 1 Corinthians 12:28?”

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

“Mr. Bennett, will you read now Ephesians 4:11?”

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”

“Now, Miss Burnside, 1 Timothy 3:2.”

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”

“Also the eighth verse.”

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.”

“Now, Stanley, what officers are mentioned in Titus 1:5?”

Stanley studied the passage carefully.

“Elders,” he said.

“Mr. Lakeman, what is mentioned in Hebrews 5:1?”

“High Priests,” Bill Lakeman answered.

“If we turn to Luke 10:1 we find where Christ also sent out seventies.”

During the readings, Alfred had again been busy with his crayon. “These then,” he said, “were a part of the building which the Apostle Paul said was fitly framed together and which was to grow into a ‘holy temple.’ ‘As lively stones,’ he tells us, ‘are built up a spiritual house.’ The officers ‘set’ in his church are;

“Christ himself, the great head.

Apostles
Prophets

Evangelists
Pastors
Teachers
Bishops
Deacons
Elders
Seventies.”

“Well,” Bill Lakeman commented, ‘the church of Christ today appears to me to be short a few stones at that rate.’”

“I guess you are right,” Alfred said as he exposed to their view once more the results of his drawing.

“We now have the church of Christ, Mr. Lakeman. What is wrong with it?”

“Well, “ the old man studied the drawing closely, “ it’s a little better than some I’ve seen because it has the officers in it that the Bible speaks of. But it’s like my idea of the church of today; it’s dead.”

“You are right, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred answered. “ That will not do for the church of Christ, for it lacks all that makes it useful or effective as an ‘holy temple.’ Evidently our work is not complete. The Apostle James tells us that the body without the spirit is dead, and Christ’s church as he left it here was not dead. Paul asserts that ‘our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’ When Christ left his church here it was more than a dead form. He gave unto them the Holy Spirit to be an ‘abiding Comforter’ in his church and kingdom, so that whenever the church of Christ is truly operating on the earth, there will be found ‘abiding’ the Holy Spirit to give power and light.”

“ I wish that were true,” Bill Lakeman asserted.

“It is true, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred answered earnestly. “Christ gave that gift to his church, and wherever that church operates you will find there Christ working with them through his Spirit.”

“Yes, that church,” the old man repeated, unconvinced.

“We will need to know,” Alfred continued, abandoning the subject, “some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit imparted light and understanding to the church. Let us all turn to 1 Corinthians, twelfth chapter. You will notice that Paul is speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, those things by which we may know that the Spirit is truly operating in the church; its means of granting light. We will begin at the eighth verse. Miss Lakeman, will you read?”

Aunt Sophronia adjusted her glasses and read: “ ‘. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom.’ “

“Just a moment,” Alfred broke in ; “then ‘wisdom’ is one of the gifts of the Spirit to the church. Let’s put it on our chart.” With a sweep of his arm he described a perfect circle on the paper before him. Bill Lakeman smiled as he saw a small, round window appear on the side of the building he had designated as “dead.” Quickly the word “wisdom” appeared in the circle.

“All right, Miss Lakeman.”

“ ‘To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.’ “

“Another window.”

“ ‘To another faith.’ “

Again the deft circle was made and a window labeled “faith” occupied its position. Bill Lakeman was watching the proceeding closely, his head on one side and a merry twinkle in his eye.

“Well, you’ve improved the looks of the building,” he said. “ But I guess no church would quarrel with you over those points.”

“No, I think not,” Alfred answered: “however, I am not trying to pick a quarrel with any church. I am only drawing an illustration of the church left here by Christ. The quarrel will probably come, however, as a natural consequence,” he ended laughing.

“Now, Miss Lakeman, you may finish your verse.”

“ ‘To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.’ “

“Are you going to put that in your church?” Stanley asked as he saw Alfred once more apply the crayon.

“No,” Alfred answered him, “I am not going to put anything in my church, Stanley; however, Christ did put it in his. Now, Miss Burnside, will you read the next verse?”

“ ‘ To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues.’ “

Bill Lakeman arose from his chair and came to Alfred’s side where he watched him closely as one by one the windows were added to the building. Sometimes his gaze wandered from the picture growing under the artist’s fingers to the face of the young man as he bent to his work. On his own face there was a shadow, a question, yet he held his peace.

"We have now," Alfred looked up from his drawing, "the church of Christ as organized (framed together), and lighted by the power of the Spirit. Yet our building is not complete . It lacks a door, a means of entrance. Mr. Bennett, perhaps if you will read the thirteenth verse, it will help us out along this line."

" 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.' "

"Then baptism is the door by which we may enter his church (body) and kingdom. A few evenings ago we learned from our study that faith, repentance, and baptism of the water(by burial or immersion) and of the spirit (through the laying on of hands) were the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. So they must also be builded into his building."

He was quiet a moment, working.

"Now, Stanley," he said, "I want you to read one more passage of Scripture: Mark 16:15-18."

" 'And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' "

"In this manner," Alfred commented, "Christ himself designates the powers of the Spirit which were placed in his church." A moment's utter silence prevailed as Alfred placed the finishing touches on his building ere he pronounced it complete.

"That is the church of Christ," he said, " as I find it taught in the Scriptures. Mr. Lakeman, does it still look dead?"

"No, it doesn't look dead, Mr. Stewart. Your picture does not, but that church is dead. I never drew it out on paper as you have done, but I've studied this subject a lot of times. What you have drawn there is the church as Christ left it here, all right; but what benefit is it to us for you to teach us about it? That church is dead," he old man went on sadly. "It lived perhaps a century; then the apostles died. The prophets had died earlier. So the foundation of apostles and prophets wasted away. The seventies were heard of no more. I think the doors must have fallen off their hinges. The world didn't want the miraculous, so they boarded up the windows. leaving only the three little ones at the top. Yes Mr. Stewart, I figure that it is a pretty dead church after all."

"Mr. Lakeman," Alfred said, "your statement is true. That's just about what happened to the church Christ left here. Man was not satisfied, and tampered with it, regardless of the warning the Lord had given that men should not take from nor add to.

"You are not the first one who has seen this condition, Mr. Lakeman. The Apostle Paul by the gift of prophecy looked forward to it. He said; ' Let no man deceive you by any means ; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition' (11 Thessalonians 2:3)

"Paul knew the church would fall away, yet the picture is not all dark," the young man went on. "Any who will give the matter serious thought will come to the same conclusion you have reached. The church lost its spiritual power, lost the organization given it by Christ, yet these things were not lost for eternity. Remember this; Christ said, ' Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matthew 16:18)He did not say that the tide of battle should never go against the church. But he did promise that it should not prevail. The ultimate victory will be with the church Christ organized."

"I hope you are right, boy," Bill Lakeman said. "I certainly hope you are right. But I can't see how it is possible . It looks to me as if the gates of hell have prevailed a good long time. A good many hundreds of years have passed since the church you have pictured there was working on earth."

"Yes," Alfred said," I know it, Mr. Lakeman. That church ceased to work here on earth for a time, times and the dividing of time, which is estimated by Bible students to be 1,260 years . That is a period of what is termed the apostasy of the church which we will consider tomorrow night. I think I have kept you long enough for tonight. It is getting dark now. However, before we leave I want to summarize what we learned tonight.

"Christ organized a church and was himself the chief cornerstone. There was in that church a quorum of twelve apostles. There were prophets."

"I'd like to ask you a question before you go further, Mr. Stewart," Jennie Burnside said. "There were no prophets after Christ's time, were there?"

"Many of them," Alfred answered her. "the twenty-first chapter of Acts mentions some of them especially who were prophets and disciples in Christ's church and calls them by name. I know the world would have us believe that prophets were done away when Christ came. But investigation will show that not only they were not done away, but also there were many more after Christ's time than before; for the Spirit was poured out mightily in the church and many 'space in tongues and prophesied.' "

"One more question, please," Jennie said. "You would not expect the church of Christ to be organized like that today, would you?"

‘Why not?’

“Well, you see the apostles are all dead. You couldn’t expect to have them.”

Alfred thoughtfully pulled a leaf from the honeysuckle at his side.

“Your question, Miss Burnside,” he answered, “is an important one. Upon the answer to that question hangs the right of every church which comes before us today, to its claims to be the church of Christ. If Christ intended, as many claim, that there should be only twelve apostles and no more, then any of these churches may truly be the church of Christ. But if, as I believe, Christ placed in his church the apostolic office, intending that office to remain in his church, we will need today to look for that church which has apostles in it if we could find the church of Christ. I do not mean that this one thing alone would answer that question, but it is among the things by which we should be able to identify the church of Christ.”

“How can you tell about that?” Stanley asked.

“Only by finding out how it was with the church Christ left. If there were never more than twelve apostles, then it would look as if the first claim were true. If, on the other hand we find that one after another became apostles in the church as long as the Spirit of God manifested itself to the church, or until the church ‘fell away,’ or went into the wilderness, then we can be assured that when the church is restored there again will be apostles in it, for it will be identically the church of Christ.”

“Can you do that?” Stanley asked again.

“I think so,” Alfred returned. “I have a little chart here in my case which I drew up along that line. I’ll just hang it here over the picture of the church and you can study it for a while. Now it does not appear that these were all apostles at the same time. It is more evident that as one dropped from the apostolic office another was ordained to take his place.”

THE FIRST TWELVE

1. Simon, called Peter
2. Andrew, his brother
3. James, son of Zebedee
4. John, his brother
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew
9. James, son of Alpheus
10. Lebbaeus, surnamed Thaddeus
11. Simon, the Canaanite,
12. Judas Iscariot

ORDAINED LATER

13. Matthias, Acts 1:25,26
14. Barnabas, Acts 13:1-4 and Acts 14:14
15. Paul, Acts 14:14 and Acts 13: 1-4
16. Sylvanus, 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6
17. Timotheus, 1 Thessalonians 1;1: 2:6
18. James, the Lord’s brother, Galatians 1:19
19. Apollos, 1 Corinthians 4: 6-9

“Well, that’s more than twelve,” Stanley commented when he had studied the chart before him.

“My contention is this,” Alfred said: “Christ himself set those offices in the church. He never at any time said they would not be there or that they should be taken away. I do not believe any man or set of men had a right to take from the church any office or set of offices which Christ placed there.”

“You’re right, boy, in that,” bill Lakeman approved.

All was quiet a moment, and Alfred took up once more his interrupted summary.

“We found in the church,” he said, “apostles, prophets, evangelists.”

“Most churches have evangelists, haven’t they?” Jennie asked again.

“Not in the church,” Alfred answered. “We do find such a title attached to certain men among the church. They are generally working for any church. An evangelist would preach in this city for one church today; next month you would probalby find him preaching for another church whose teachings and belief radically differ from the one for whom he preached today. Christ set his evangelists ‘in the church.’ ”

Jennie continued her questions earnestly.

“Do you not regard those men as broad-minded?” she asked. “That seems to me only an evidence that they are not narrow.”

“To me, “ Alfred said thoughtfully, “the ministry of Christ are left in his stead, as physicians to the church, quite as much as they are left to be ministers to convert the world. ‘ Feed my sheep,’ was Christ’s instruction. Look after ‘the flock,’ Paul warned. Now if as these men, who preach as readily for one denomination as for another, will tell us it takes all these churches to make the church of Christ, it is then their duty as spiritual physicians to combat the disease and disorder they find in the body of Christ. What would you think of Doctor Lakeman here, if you called him to combat a severe case of stomach trouble, and when the diagnosis as made, he would refuse to mention that disordered condition, and would only assure you that the lungs were in perfect working order? You wouldn’t think of him as a broad-minded physician; you would look upon him as a moral coward, who was afraid to look the real trouble in the face and fight it. Now, that is the condition of the religious world, as I see it. Today, when I went downtown, I passed a certain corner on which, almost facing each other, stood two great church buildings. Now, if they are both the church of Christ, why were they not worshiping under the same roof, listening to the same instructions for the same minister? The answer is easy; they could not agree on certain doctrinal points. In other words, there were schisms, divisions, or disorders among them. Now if one of these spiritual physicians, called evangelists, came along, do you think he, in preaching to these two congregations, would attack those disagreements or disorders and set them right, that they might in the future worship in unity; or would he ignore those points of difference and preach only along those lines where he knew he would find agreement?”

“You would never know,” Bill Lakeman said, “that a difference existed, to listen to his sermons.”

“That is why, “ Alfred said,” that instead of considering those men broad-minded, I feel that they are just evading an important issue. The Bible admonishes all Christians to ‘speak the same thing.’

“Before we say goodnight,” the young man continued, “I wish you would each take a list of the officers found in Christ’s church, also a list of references. Check it over carefully for yourself, for this is a vital question and I do not want you to take my word for the matter, but rather seek the truth for yourselves. Those officers are:

Apostles	Elders
Prophets	Seventies
Evangelists	High Priests
Pastors	Teachers
Bishops	Deacons”

And so the night fell softly over the hill and valley, forest and lake, enveloping in its sweet restfulness all the world.

CHAPTER 25

JOHN BENNETT’S BIG FIGHT

Clankety-clank! Bang! Clankety-clank.” John Bennett looked up from the loom over which he bent, with a slight frown. One of the slender silken threads which wove itself almost imperceptibly into the fabric snapped, and John Bennett felt he had cause to frown. He stepped quickly to the side of the loom and threw back the lever. Instantly the great machine was silent, the shuttle poised just on the point of making its dash between the crossed layers of the woolen and silken threads which it was rapidly transforming into cloth.

“What’s the matter, Bennett?”

The foremen stopped by the loom and watched John Bennett make the tie.

“Those silk threads are hard to manage, sir,” the weaver replied. “One of them just broke, but I think it will not show much when the piece is finished.”

“That’s well tied, Bennett.”

The foreman straightened up from his inspection of the work. “That’s the reason I gave you this piece to weave. I wouldn’t trust another weaver in this house with that piece of cloth.”

"It's coming out well," he added, running his hand over a portion of the finished product. Then he laughed as he stood back and surveyed the cloth before him. "I suppose somebody will call that brown. The green and red are hidden just enough to give it that effect. How do you like it, Bennett?"

"It's the finest thing that has passed through my hands this year, sir. It will easily form your lead."

"I think so myself," the other answered. He leaned forward suddenly and ran his finger over certain portions of the cloth.

"Now that's just what I wanted," he said. "That blue thread is given just the right amount of prominence. That's the beauty of the piece to me. Not the things the ordinary person will see, but the things they must look for to find. Yes, sir, that's well woven. Don't hurry it. I'll try to get you an increase of rate on this so you can afford to go carefully."

"Thank you, sir." John Bennett raised his hand to throw his loom once more into action. The foreman stopped him with a gesture.

"What's the matter Bennett?" he asked. "Your hand is not often unsteady. Didn't you have your usual drink this morning?"

"I did not, sir!" John Bennett cut the words short. It was evident he battled with ill humor. It was also unpleasant to have a matter brought to mind which he was trying so hard to forget.

"You haven't quit, have you?" the other questioned mercilessly.

"I have!" The words almost hissed from his teeth. The foreman versed in his kind knew something of his suffering. He shook his head, and the gesture seemed to say it was useless. He had seen men of John Bennett's class try to quit before. He had not meant to be unkind, but his lack of faith only irritated the already overwrought nerves of the man before him.

"I tell you I have quit." His raised voice was drowned by the steady roar of the machines about him. Only the foremen heard. "It will probably kill me to do it, but I'd rather be dead than be a beastly drunkard."

"There, there, Bennett, I didn't mean to offend you. I was only surprised, that's all. I'm glad to see you quit. You're too valuable a man to throw yourself away on drink. Why, I'd a fired you long ago if I could have filled your place. Stick to it, Bennett; stick to it. You have my best wishes."

The man moved on in his tour of inspection. After a while he looked back to where John Bennett still stood by the side of his silent loom.

"Poor devil," he murmured.

Then he saw the object of his solicitude put on his battered hat and go out.

"I thought so," he continued his self-communion. "He had to go for his drink. Couldn't stand it any longer.

Well, that would have been the end sooner or later, so it really doesn't matter."

However, the foreman was mistaken. John Bennett had not gone for a drink. He walked up the street away from the direction of Mike Farrell's saloon and, turning the corner, took the short side street which led to the little patch of timber on the edge of town. In his soul raged a terrific battle. His very being was on fire, and as he walked he wet his dry lips often. He tore open the front of his shirt, hoping vainly that a cool draught of air might ease the parched condition of his throat.

"Hell," he murmured. "It's hell on earth. I wish, O God, I wish that bullet had gone home."

He reached the end of the street and dropped down on a hollow log under the shade of a great oak tree and let his head sink into his hands. Great drops of sweat not caused by the heat of day, gathered on his brow. The muscles of his face were drawn and his huge frame trembled with the intensity of his suffering. After a while he sprang to his feet.

"It's no use," he said fiercely. "I can't do it."

He started forward as though to retrace his steps, then stopped suddenly.

"Of course you can't do it- not alone."

He looked around him in astonishment, trying to locate the voice; then he laughed. He knew he only heard in fancy the words Alfred Stewart had said to him that day in the woods; knew that memory had tricked him and the words only came to him out of the past. He sat down once more on the log and let his mind run back to that other day. He heard again the prayer and understood now the words he had not comprehended then.

"Of course you can't do it- not alone."

His head dropped once more into his hands, but not now with an attitude of despair, and the first prayer he could remember passed his lips.

"God help me," he prayed. "God help me."

The shrill mill whistle announced that the noon hour had arrived. Immediately from the doors of both mill and factory poured a steady stream of workers. The machinery was quiet, and very soon the streets were deserted. John Bennett did not move when the whistle blew. Indeed he had not even heard it in its blowing. He still sat on the

log beneath the oak and thought of the struggle before him. There would be no dinner for him this day; he had quite forgotten it. The hopelessness had gone from his face, and while the burning in his veins was unabated, yet from some source had come strength of spirit to withstand. Finally as one o'clock drew near, he arose and retraced his steps toward the mill and his loom. He had taken up again his burden and felt again his determination to win. He shuttered when he realized this was payday and that he would find it necessary to walk with full pockets past Mike Farrell's saloon. In fancy he could see the crowd who usually waited him there, who knew of this night and were always eager to join him in the carousals which accompanied it. As he threw his loom into action, he uttered, unconsciously now, his prayer, "God help me."

As the afternoon wore away, Alfred Stewart looked up from his study and consulted his watch.

"It's later than I thought," he murmured, hastily putting his books away. "I promised Bennett to walk home with him from the mill. I'd hate to miss him tonight."

A few moments later he entered the lane on his way to town. In his heart he feared his delay might be fatal, and endeavored to increase his walking speed. He felt a degree of impatience that the crutch should so retard his progress. About one hundred yards north of the lane entrance he encountered the first sidewalks leading into town and breathed a sigh of relief, for here he could walk much faster. Choosing the most direct route to the plant which furnished so many of the poor of Leesburg with employment, he hurried on., thankful Leesburg was not large and that not many blocks separated him from his destination.

Turning a corner suddenly, he saw the brick and frame buildings composing the plant at the foot of a hill about four blocks distant, and smiled as he realized the mill was still running. He would be in time, after all, he thought. The smile with that thought was short lived, for accompanying a sudden burst of steam the whistle screamed its message, and Alfred could see far below him the stream of employees pouring from its doors.

He quickened his pace, hoping John Bennett would wait for him, and sickened as he thought of the whisky-weakened will of the man who must trust himself to pass the saloon alone. When Alfred reached the mill, all was quiet. John Bennett was nowhere in sight, but down the street he saw an irresolute figure and knew that John Bennett was making the trip alone.

The young man hastened after him hoping vainly to overtake him. He longed to throw the crutch away and try his school-day sprinting, but prudence overruled and he banished the thought. Presently John Bennett turned the corner and Alfred lost sight of him. Once more he tried to increase his speed, for he knew that not far from the corner was the levee and Mike Farrell's saloon.

He did not know that several blocks behind him, cantering easily, were Spider and Stanley Lakeman. Stanley had recognized the figure with the crutch and smiled in anticipation of overtaking him. A short word to Spider and the little animal broke from her canter and started off at a brisk pace.

Suddenly an exclamation broke from Stanley's lips: "Oh, that boy!" he cried. "Hey, Stewart," but his voice was lost in the distance.

Alfred Stewart, suddenly reaching the corner, had seen something which caused him for one brief moment to stand as one paralyzed. Then, with one sweep of his arm, he sent the crutch flying into the weeds and broke into a run. Stanley groaned aloud when he saw him limp painfully ere he lost sight of him behind the buildings.

"Oh, that foot," he said. "Go, Spider."

As Spider took the corner on a dead run, Stanley had another surprise, for he saw Alfred Stewart force back the swinging doors of Mike Farrell's saloon, and enter.

"What in the world?" Stanley exclaimed, and threw himself from the saddle, reaching the sidewalk with one bound. Then he, too, pushed inward the swinging doors and was lost to view.

When Stanley Lakeman found himself inside Mike Farrell's place, this is what he saw:

At the rear of the room, with his back to the wall, John Bennett crouched like a tiger ready to spring, his cheeks flushed, his eyes glowing with a fierce light. Before him measuring his full length on the floor, stretched a man who was raising himself slowly to his elbow. Stanley caught fleetingly the bewildered look on his face. He had no time, however, to contemplate these things, for John Bennett's catlike attitude suddenly materialized in a forward spring, and as if with one motion, his arm flew out and caught with his doubled fist, on the point of the chin, another who had dared to interfere. The man's head flew back, and Stanley saw him crumple with a groan and fall in a heap against the counter, carrying with him to the floor a shower of broken glass.

John Bennett swung his arms wildly.

"Come on: make me drink if you can. Come on," he yelled his challenge to a third of the same type who was closing in on him. Stanley saw them meet ferociously; then the thud of a falling body attracted his attention to another part of the room.

Alfred Stewart was likewise engaged. His antagonist, more nearly matching his strength, had gone down only after a lively struggle, and Alfred was panting with labored breath as he stood with clenched fists watching narrowly as

the other endeavored to regain his feet.

Then Stanley saw that which brought him into action himself, for crouched and creeping, a malignant expression on his bestial face, Mike Farrell was slipping up on Alfred from the back. Had he expected the attack, Stanley could never have handled Mike Farrell, for that individual had kept some semblance of order in his saloon by sheer muscular force, and none who knew him dared to go against him or against his sharp-spoken orders. But Mike did not know, and upon this fact hung the outcome of that day's battle. Without hesitation Stanley grabbed the crouching figure by each shoulder and threw him back against the door where his head struck the jam with such force as to stun him for a time into inaction. Stanley stepped to Alfred's side and, stooping over, pulled the man before him to his feet. "Now see here, Mart," he said, "you go over there and take that chair and behave yourself. It isn't healthy for you to monkey around here."

The ruffian slunk away, muttering as he went.

Mike Farrell's befogged brain had cleared somewhat, and he struggled to his feet with a wicked gleam in his eyes and a snarl on his lips which betokened no good to his assailant. When he recognized his offender, the snarl died perceptibly on his lips.

"It won't do, Farrell," Stanley said. "You stay out of this fight."

"You take him out," the enraged whisky vendor spluttered, indicating Alfred. "No man can come into my saloon and raise hell with my customers- not while Mike Farrell's got two good hands,. Take him out, I say." But Mike Farrell did not venture again from behind the counter. He stood there and poured a steady stream of oaths at Alfred Stewart.

Meanwhile the fight in the rear of the room went on. John Bennett found himself facing now an antagonist who would not go down before his blows. His own face was bleeding from a cut above the eye, while his opponent's sight was dimmed by the pain of a broken nose. When Stanley and Alfred were free once more, they saw the two men locked in a terrific embrace. Back and forth they swayed, neither daring to break his hold upon the other. They staggered against the table, and the clatter of breaking glass filled the room; then John Bennett's foot struck against the reeking cuspidor, and the slimy, filthy substance which filled it oozed into the great cracks of the floor and spread over the surface. John Bennett made a desperate effort to break the other's hold, but his foot came in contact with the slippery mass and he staggered backward. He was saved from a fatal fall only by striking the old iron stove, left standing from the winter before, and used now only as a receptacle of refuse and a container of tobacco juice. As it was, the old stove was pushed from its improvised brick legs and the pipe clattered down upon their heads with a terrific din. Soot-covered and gasping for breath, their embrace was broken, and by mutual consent they stood facing each other, waiting only the opportunity to grapple again.

"Here, you," Mike Farrell thundered, taking advantage of the brief respite. "Stop that fight; stop, I say." And both men, long accustomed to obeying that voice, relaxed unbeaten. Yet on John Bennett's face was a light of triumph. Not against his opponent; he had not won there, but the greater battle with himself was won, and he was glad.

"Come on, Bennett, let's go home," Stanley urged, adding the weight of his own influence to the effect of Mike Farrell's threat. With characteristic meekness John Bennett joined them without once glancing at his erstwhile enemy.

As the doors swung behind them, they heard Mike Farrell take up once more his interrupted stream of profanity. When they had gained the walk, Stanley took charge of the situation.

"Come down to the creek, Bennett," he said, "and we'll see the extent of that cut on your face. It won't do to let your wife see you looking like that."

They stepped through the dust-covered weeds to the highway, crossed the road, and descended the bank to where the waters flowed freely below. Here they washed the blood and soot from his face and found that his injury was only slight.

"I don't understand this at all," Stanley said. "I don't see how you ever got into that kind of a mess."

"I knew it had to come," John Bennett replied. "The only way you can break with those fellows is with a fight, and I'm glad it's over."

"You see they were waiting for me, They knew it was payday at the mill and naturally expected I would treat . I told them I had quit drinking and didn't want to go in. They thought I was joking, and of course they all laughed. Then they knew I meant it. To refuse to drink with them was in itself a personal insult, and they knew I knew it. It might have been different if South Johnson hadn't been in the crowd. He's never satisfied so long as there's a man in the crowd he hasn't had a fight with. So my time with him was coming anyhow.

"When he heard me say I had quit drinking, he intimated that I had joined the church, and they thought that was a bigger joke than ever. He said: ' Well, I guess you will take a drink, little man,' and they began pulling me in. At first I'm afraid I didn't care enough. You see I was burning up for a drink myself, and I thought, 'Oh, what's the

use? But," he laughed as though he felt quite guilty, "I found myself saying over and over, 'God help me,' and I guess he did, for when we were through the door it somehow looked different to me. I can't see now how I ever willingly stepped into it. I must have been blind. Something seemed to come over me, and I'd have died before I'd taken a drink, just then somehow I wasn't afraid, although I know that bunch. Some of them would have knifed me before I got out if you fellows hadn't come. They never would fight fair in a pinch.

"I knew what it meant, so I backed up against the wall so they couldn't get behind me and told them if they wanted to fight to come on, but I wouldn't drink a drop of their damned stuff. Excuse me, sir," he added, turning to Alfred. That young man only smiled.

"I heard you say that," he said. "I came in just then. They intended to double on you; I stopped part of that."

"I'm glad you came, sir," John Bennett said. "I'd forgotten I had asked you, but I'm glad you came. They climbed the bank again and stood once more upon the highway. John Bennett pulled from his pocket his pay envelope, unopened, and held it out for their inspection.

"I'm going home now," he said with a glad ring to his voice. "I'm going home to Mary."

Alfred Stewart held out his hand, and John Bennett wrung it earnestly. Stanley laid his hand on his shoulder.

"I'm mighty proud of you tonight, Bennett. That was a great fight—a great fight."

Together they watched him go north along the levee, cross the bridge and disappear down the trail leading to his home.

"I had started down there," Stanley said, "but I don't think I'll break in on that little woman's hour of happiness. I'll see the babe tomorrow. Besides, that foot of yours probably needs attention again. Oh, I wanted to get hold of you when I saw you throw that crutch away and run. How did you ever come to do it?"

"I had to," Alfred said. "I was trying to overtake Bennett, because I was afraid for him to go past that place alone. Just as I got to the corner I saw those men pulling him into the saloon. They were taking him in by force. When I saw that, I forgot all about the foot. I'm afraid," he added, laughing, "there was almost murder in my heart about then. I know there was fight."

"Yes, I guess there was fight," Stanley agreed. "I just wish you could have seen the picture you and Bennett made when I got there. Oh, it was rich! But did you see Mike Farrell's little game?"

"Yes, it would have been a great deal worse if you hadn't come. Bennett and I couldn't have held them all, but say, would you have believed Bennett was the powerful man his is? He doesn't look it."

"No, he doesn't," Stanley agreed. "He gave Johnson all he could handle, and Johnson is no scrub himself. It was a great fight."

"I can't see," he said seriously, "why a civilized country allows a place like that to run. I just can't see it."

"Money worship," Alfred said.

They had retraced their steps to where the crutch so hastily thrown aside still lay among the weeds. Stanley recovered it and whistled to Spider.

"Now you get on and ride home," he ordered. "I'm most anxious to know the extent of the damage done to that foot."

"It does hurt," Alfred admitted, "but I couldn't help it; I just had to run."

"I know," Stanley said. "I'm not blaming you. I think I would have blamed you if you hadn't. The only thing now for us to do is to repair damages."

When they reached home they found Aunt Sophronia carefully keeping the supper warm for them, while Bill Lakeman arranged the chairs and tables under the honeysuckle for the evening study. When Stanley had examined the foot he seemed to be relieved.

"Not as bad as I feared," he said; "beyond a little soreness I think there is nothing serious. But I'll tell you I was afraid when I saw you run. Visions of a man crippled for the rest of his life were going through my head.... That's just what I want, aunt. Here, Stewart, keep your foot in this hot water while we eat. That will draw some of the soreness out."

Supper over, they assembled once more beneath the honeysuckle. Bill Lakeman was already in his chair, bending over his great Bible.

"Father, where do you suppose I found Stewart tonight?" Stanley asked as they came up to him.

The old man glanced at Alfred's crimson face and scented a joke.

"I couldn't guess," he said.

"In Mike Farrell's saloon. Now what do you think of that?" Stanley set himself on the edge of one of the tables and let his feet swing in boyish fashion. His black eyes snapped with mischief. "That's not the worst of it either. He was having a fight."

Bill Lakeman leaned back in his chair and looked at his son keenly. There was a half smile in the glance he shot at Alfred.

“And where were you, Stanley, when you found him?”

Alfred laughed heartily as the boomerang came back at Stanley, but that young man was unshaken.

“Well, out with it,” the old man laughed. “I never could stop you when you wanted to tell anything.”

So Stanley told his father of the fight at Farrell’s, and of John Bennett’s victory.

Bill Lakeman was jubilant.

“That fight will do more,” he declared, “to make him keep his pledge than anything else in the world. Stewart, it was a lucky thing you missed him at the mill. Yes, sir, that will be a great thing for Bennett. But if you hadn’t both been there, it might have ended differently. Yes, sir,” he repeated, “that was a good day’s work.”

“There comes Bennett now,” Stanley said. “Look how he carries himself, his head up and his shoulders back. Jove! It looks good to see that kind of a change.”

“He’s won back his self-respect,” Bill Lakeman said.

“That’s the biggest thing for a man. When he can’t respect himself, there is no foundation to build on. We will now just begin to know Bennett, because he will begin to know himself.”

The object of their conversation swung through the gate and up the walk to the honeysuckle. There was genuine good fellowship in the “Good evening” with which he greeted them. It was with a new grace of manner that he took the chair Bill Lakeman offered him.

“I wonder where Jennie is,” Stanley said. “We can’t study without her.”

“She’ll be here soon,” Bill Lakeman promised.

His prediction was fulfilled, for at that moment Jennie and her mount appeared, emerging from the grove.

CHAPTER 26

WHAT BECAME OF THE CHURCH?

Last night in our study,” Alfred said, “we considered the church or kingdom of God, and Mr. Lakeman made the statement, ‘That church is dead.’ I think he voiced one of the great acts in the tragedy of this world, for the statement is literally true. The church organized and left here by Christ disappeared from the face of the earth. It is what we term ‘the Apostasy’ of the church, or, as the Apostle Paul puts it, the ‘falling away.’ So as we studied last night ‘the church organized,’ we will follow tonight that church through its subsequent history, through its sickness and death. We will use for a foundation of our study, 11 Thessalonians 2:3; ‘Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.’ In connection, Mr. Lakeman, will you read 11 Timothy 4:3?”

“‘For the time will come,’” Bill Lakeman read, “‘when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.’”

‘I bring these two passages,’ Alfred said, “to show you that the Apostle Paul fully understood in his time just what would take place. How deeply he felt this we learn from his parting plea to the elders of Ephesus. Miss Burnside, will you read it from Acts 20: 28-30?”

“‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.’”

“Thus we see,” Alfred went on, “how earnestly the apostles fought away this condition for, it seems the first few centuries. However in the third century the words of the apostles began to be fulfilled. Speaking of that time Mosheim tells us that the ‘face of things began to change in the Christian church.’ The apostle had said, speaking directly to the ministry, ‘Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things.’ So it came that in the third century the ministers began to forget the admonition of Christ to go without ‘purse or scrip,’ and indulged themselves in luxurious living. The bishop set up a throne and surrounded himself with ministers. They began to burn incense in many of the churches and to observe many rites and ceremonies. By the end of the fourth century, Mosheim again tells us, there was left only a ‘mere shadow of the ancient church government.’

“By the latter part of the fifth century, prayers to the saints and to the Virgin Mary were introduced. In the sixth century, the church so far had forgotten the meek and lowly Nazarene that whole nations were forced to accept Christianity on penalty of death. Orders of monks were introduced, and papal power became supreme. During this century the monks became very rich through gifts from the people. The use of holy water was also introduced during

that period.

“In the eighth century the worship of images became so great that some of the Christians of the Greek church formed themselves into a body of image breakers, to destroy what they believed to be idolatry. These, however were excommunicated in the year 869.

“In the ninth century the doctrine of transubstantiation was introduced. Predestination also began to be taught.

“In the tenth century the worship of the Virgin Mary became so intense as almost to equal that of Christ. It was also during this century that the rosary was introduced.

“In the eleventh century the popes received the title: ‘Masters of the world.’

“From the twelfth to the sixteenth century the church waged the terrible persecutions against those who undertook to translate the Bible and allow it to be read by the people.

“From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century we see the coming forth of the different reformers.

“Now let us look at the church. By this time the quorum of twelve apostles had disappeared; the seventies were gone; the ordinance of baptism had been changed. The laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost was not practiced after the fifth century. Prophets no longer warned the people. Teachers were forgotten. The organization of the church was changed; the offices of popes and cardinals had come into existence.

“So the church was dead, and in its place stood one utterly unlike the church Christ had left. He had given them warning; ‘Ye shall not add unto the words which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught there from.’

“The church had done both. Therefore the church was dead. No longer did she exist divinely commissioned from on high.

“This has been a long statement, yet it is only a few of the changes which were made in the church. The Lord knew what was coming and sent forth his mighty warning through John the Revelator. The picture is given in the twelfth chapter of Revelation. We will listen while Mr. Lakeman reads the first verse.”

“ ‘And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.’ “

“We are given here,” Alfred commented, “a picture of the church in its power, ‘clothed with the sun’ and crowned with twelve stars.”

“What do the twelve stars mean?” Stanley asked.

“Christ left with the church,” Alfred answered, “ a quorum of twelve apostles who had the oversight of the church. As long as these remained the church retained her power; she kept her magnificent robe, described as the sun. Now Stanley, read the next two verses, please.”

“ ‘And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pain to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.’ “

“Well, I don’t understand that at all,” Stanley said. “If the woman is the church, what is the dragon?”

“The second verse of the twentieth chapter of Revelation will answer your question, Stanley. You may read it if you like.”

“ ‘And he laid hold on the dragon,’ “ Stanley read, “ ‘that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.’ “

“The Devil?” Stanley questioned. “ This is getting interesting.”

He turned the pages once more and read again the passages Alfred had assigned him.

“ ‘A great red dragon, having seven heads.’ Now what does that mean?” he questioned further. “I never before heard of Satan having seven heads.”

Alfred and Bill Lakeman laughed at his impatience.

“Well, I want to know about this, “ Stanley defended.

“There’s no use in its being in the Bible if we cannot understand it.”

“You are right, Stanley, “ Alfred answered; “it would not be in the ‘Bible if it could not be understood. Revelation 17:9 tells us what the seven heads are. Mr. Lakeman, will you look it up?”

The old man studied the verse carefully.

“The seven heads are seven mountains,” he said.

“Seven mountains ! The devil with seven mountains!” Stanley’s voice was incredulous.

“Stanley,” Alfred said, “can’t you think of seven hills that have been prominent enough in the history of the world to attract the attention of even the God of heaven?”

“I can’t think of anything,” Stanley answered after a moment’s thought,” except the seven hills upon which Rome was built.

“That must be it,” he added musingly. “That place was devilish enough to suit anybody. Was that it?”

“I think you have guessed it,” Alfred answered.

“Well,” Stanley said again, “do I dare ask any more questions?”

“Ask your questions,” Alfred said. “Each question helps to arrive at a clearer conception of the truth. I think you are entirely right in associating the dragon of the vision we are considering with Rome. Rome at the time of this vision ruled over practically all of the known world. The kings of the earth came to it with their riches and partook of its pleasures and its sins. You have studied the history and know the full extent of her sinfulness. It is small wonder that the Devil, or dragon, chose it for his seat of government. There was probably no spot on earth so wicked.

“Thinking of it in that light, can you see the fulfillment of the vision in the attitude of Rome toward the early Christian church?”

“I guess that’s right,” Stanley replied. “Rome did all in her power to exterminate the Christians. “It’s remarkable what they had to endure during the first three or four centuries.”

“If we will turn to the seventh chapter of Daniel,” Alfred went on, “we will learn something more of this matter. The Lord is here showing the prophet a picture of the future, from the time in which he lived down to the end.

“We cannot take time tonight to read it all, but you will see that Daniel in his vision is shown four beasts coming up from the sea(verse3) . He tells us that the first beast is like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard; but the fourth beast, the most terrible of all, he cannot classify. Speaking of this beast, he said it was dreadful, and terrible, and exceedingly strong. He tells us it had great iron teeth, that it devoured and broke into pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it. He also tells us it had ten horns(verse7).”

“Ten horns?” Stanley repeated. “It must have been the same as this dragon, for it had horns.”

“Yes,” Alfred agreed, “that is its mark of identification. Now we will see if you were right in saying it was Rome. Mr. Bennett, will you read verse 23?”

John Bennett read: “ ‘Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.’ “

“Now,” Alfred said, “we have learned that these beasts represent kingdoms. The first beast or kingdom should be the one in which Daniel was living at the time. That was the Babylonish kingdom. What followed that? Can you tell us, Miss Burnside?”

“The Medes and Persians, I think.”

“The Medes and Persians,” Alfred confirmed. “Now, Mr. Lakeman, what followed the Medes and Persians?”

“The great kingdom under Alexander the Great.”

“Thus the third beast,” Alfred said, “represented the Greek kingdom. We could prove this further by the four heads and four wings if we had time. Each of these kingdoms in its turn ruled over the smaller kingdoms around it. “that brings us now to the fourth or most terrible beast. Stanley, what was the next great world power after the Greek?”

“Rome,” Stanley answered.

“Yes,” Alfred went on, “the beast with the seven heads – mountains- and ten horns.”

“What do you understand by the ten horns?” The question came timidly from Jennie.

“The Bible tells us that the ten horns were ten kings. Rome differed from the others in this respect. It’s life as a strong nation was much longer than the other three shown in the vision. Only one strong king each had ruled over Babylon and Greece, only two strong kings over the Medes and Persians, while ten strong kings ruled over Rome. The other kingdoms had been strong, yet when viewed in comparison with Rome they had been weak.

“We will now turn again to the twelfth chapter of Revelation,” Alfred went on. “We have learned already that the beast stood before the woman ready to devour her child when it was born. Miss Burnside, how was the child saved from him?”

“This says he was caught up to heaven,” Jennie answered.

“Yes,” Alfred said, “when the child was born, it was caught away and taken back to the throne of God. Thus it was that the kingdom of God was lost from the earth. Christ was no longer with the church by the power of his Spirit. Will you tell us, Stanley, if, after her child was taken, the woman was able to stand longer before the dragon?”

“This tells us that the woman fled into the wilderness.”

“The church could not stand alone before the Devil. The time had come when communication from heaven to earth had ceased. History tells us how speaking in tongues and prophecy vanished during the third and fourth centuries. The elders were no longer made ‘overseers by the Holy Ghost.’ The people began to heap to themselves teachers. The Lord no longer spoke and said: ‘Separate unto me.... for the work whereunto I have called them.’ So it was that the condition Mr. Lakeman mentioned last night came about. The kingdom of God and his Christ was taken back to the throne, and the church was lost in the wilderness. Now, Stanley, read the last verse of this chapter.”

“ ‘And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ ”

“Now we will come once more to Daniel 7. Mr. Lakeman, will you read verses 8 and 21? The prophet is now speaking of the beast with ten horns.”

“ ‘I considered the horns,’ ” the old man read, “ ‘and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them.’ ”

“Now, Mr. Bennett, will you read Revelation 13:7?”

“ ‘And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.’ ”

“So we see the fate of the church,” Alfred said, “her child taken from her back to God’s throne, overcome by the dragon, swallowed up in the wilderness.”

“Well, I can’t see,” Bill Lakeman said, “why Christ, if he is greater than the Devil- and he undoubtedly is – should allow the Devil to overcome his church. Why didn’t he use his power to protect them from the Devil? That’s what I can’t see.”

“Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred said, “I should like to tell you a story. There was once a great war. Opposing each other in the conflict were two generals, the greatest the world has ever known – so great, in fact, there never could be two others like them.

“However, one of these generals was much greater than the other, so, although his force of men and the number of officers under him were very small, when he led them forth to battle they prevailed over the hosts of the enemy. And the enemy feared them, for though so few they were mighty in battle. However, there came a time when the captain of the little band found it necessary to return to the capital city to confer for a time with the father, the king(for he was prince of a mighty house,), at the seat of government.

“Before he left, he called his officers together and left with them plans for the carrying on of the battle.

“ ‘If you will carry out these plans,’ he told them, ‘ the enemy cannot prevail against you, and I myself will send you special instructions by a messenger who will travel constantly from the capital city to you. He will inform you of the movements of the enemy before they take place, and you will know how and where to meet them.

“ ‘In due time I will come again unto you, and reward you greatly for your work. But be very careful to do the things I have told you, that you may not fall into the hands of the enemy.’

“With that he left them, and with his plans in their hands, they took up once more the battle with the hosts before them.

“True to the prediction of their captain, they prevailed, and felt very joyful whenever they saw the hosts of the enemy put to flight by the fighting of their little band.

“However, the victory was not always easily won, for the captain against whom they fought was very strong and very cunning.

“Some fell in battle; others, having served faithfully their allotted time, were recalled with honor to their capital city; while the messenger, traveling constantly between the capital city and the army, told them who the captain wished to have fill their places, and many other things of great importance to them.

“But after a time those leaders ceased to study the plans so closely and began to say within themselves; ‘ What need have we of the messenger? Are we not able to go against this army alone? Are we not mighty, even mighty in battle? Behold, these plans which he has left us are not good. Many things in them are not needful in our warfare. Therefore we will not observe to do them.’

“Now when the messenger had brought word of this to the captain, he felt very sorrowful and arose immediately and dispatched unto them a mighty message of warning, in which he pictured to them what the outcome of this matter would be.

“When the messenger had brought to them this warning, they grumbled and complained and said; ‘The words of our captain are hard to be understood; behold his message is sealed, that we cannot understand.’ But they did not ask the messenger to explain to them the message, and he returned to the capital city with a sorrowful heart. And the captain mourned over his army because they would not longer hear his words and endeavor to do them.

“ ‘What message, O prince,’ the messenger asked of him, ‘would you have me take to the army? Perhaps now they may hear me.’

“But the prince answered sadly; ‘They have transgressed the laws, changed the plans, and broken the covenant(Isaiah 24:5), therefore does the enemy overcome them(Revelation 13:7), and wear them out (Daniel7:25),and my mighty army is destroyed. Only a few are left and the enemy shall greatly make war with them. They are now given into his hands until they have learned that their own strength and wisdom are unavailing. Then you may go again with a message, and among the few who will hear you will we organize again my army and destroy utterly the

enemy until he shall be heard of no more. rest here in peace until the time shall be fulfilled.’ “

The story ended, Bill Lakeman sat lost in thought for some time; then he spoke:

“I guess you are right,” he said. “I guess that’s just about what happened. They changed his laws and twisted his church around in such a manner you couldn’t even recognize her. Yes, I guess that’s right. The world wouldn’t listen, and Christ wouldn’t compel them to obey him: he just let the Devil have them for a time to see how they’d like the change of rule.”

“Yes,” Alfred said, “the church was so changed that even the apostle, who had seen her in vision, saw her as a strange women, when the spirit caught her away into the wilderness. He saw the church, not at enmity now with the great red dragon, but riding in state upon his back. Let’s turn and read it in Revelation 17:3,4. Miss Burnside, we will listen to you.”

“ ‘So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness,’ “ Jennie read, ‘ ‘ and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.’ “

“Now the sixth verse.”

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus ; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

“Was it the same woman?” Jennie whispered. “Surely the church could not do that.”

“The same,” Alfred answered, “yet not the same. True, she was still called the church, but oh, the contrast! Changed in form and dress, she no longer walked with Christ dressed in linen clean and white, but partook of the favors of Rome and doled out her sins and her darkness to the kings of the earth. Riches decked her, but not the grace of the Spirit of God. The time had come when the ‘man of sin’ exalted himself above ‘all that is called God’ and sat in what the world considered to be the ‘temple of God.’ So the church was dead. It no longer sent out its message of salvation. In the words of Isaiah, ‘ The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep... the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.’ The earth had entered its midnight of darkness.”

CHAPTER 27

HENRY PARSONS SET ADRIFT- AND CAUGHT AGAIN

Henry Parsons stood at the window in the library looking out over the roadway and across the strip of well-kept lawn to a place where in times gone by had stood the widow’s cottage, and to which, still traceable to the close observer, a pathway left, made by the repeated impress of childish feet.

The cottage had disappeared, but as the young man gazed it stood once more in its place as of yore and overflowed with life and cheer.

He whistled a low tune, and on his handsome, worldly face was written a strange wistfulness which had so lately come to him. Since his visit to the Burnside home, a picture had been in his mind, and vague and intangible as it was, that picture was gradually working a change in his heart. No longer the things which had yesterday formed the structure of his life, seemed important. a relative view of values had not yet come. It was, as we said before, nothing tangible, yet the uncertain feeling of a man in whom a transformation of character is taking place.

His father felt something of all this as he watched him, and that feeling raised a fear in his heart that the plans so fondly cherished might after all come to naught. A moment later he asked:

“You dined at the Burnside’s yesterday, I believe? Did you find all well with them?”

“Splendid,” his son returned: “ it was a very pleasant day. I’m afraid I remained longer than strict conventionality demanded.”

“Ah.” Squire Parsons face lighted. After all, he reasoned, his fears were groundless.

“She is a beautiful girl,” he added meditatively, yet watched his son closely.

Immediately there arose before the abstracted mind of the younger man a picture of a beautiful girl with golden-brown hair, and starry eyes which looked at him half in fear, half in welcome, and he herd again the strains of the song:

Oh, Don’t you remember
Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?

“She is indeed,” he answered with more warmth than the occasion demanded.

Squire Parsons' smile was fraught with satisfaction. He dismissed all fear from his mind and considered for a time the best manner in which to broach the subject uppermost in his mind.

"Marion Burnside," he went on in a confidential tone, "is in rather straitened circumstances financially. That is not generally known. I think his daughter does not know. All his investments have not turned out well."

"Why, the woolen mills are paying, aren't they?" the young man asked in surprise. "They seem to be running steadily."

"Yes, but mortgaged," the father returned. "Everything he has is mortgaged, even his home."

"I can hardly make myself believe it," Henry Parsons asserted again. "I thought he was making money fast."

"Well, don't say anything," the older man cautioned. "Most people think that, and he may pull through. I figure there is about one chance for him and that lies with his daughter."

Henry Parsons' eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"How can that be?" he asked.

"Well, if she marries right and her husband manages her property carefully, they can clear the factory and then in turn the home."

"I didn't know his daughter had any property," the young man said half-questioningly.

"Yes," Squire Parsons answers, "she owns one-third interest in the C.P. Company. I think that interest could be made to pay off her father's other indebtedness. As I said before, it would all depend on her husband."

"Well, I can't see," Henry Parsons observed, "where the husband comes in. Why can't Marion Burnside attend to her own affairs herself?"

"He has no control over this property and can't do it, while a husband does have a certain amount of control over the wife's property."

"Well," Henry Parsons said meditatively; "is she planning marriage?"

"Not that I know of," Squire Parsons returned, "but it's time she married somebody."

After a moment's silence the older man continued: "Now if a young man like yourself, Henry, should get in there, it would be a fine thing. When Marion Burnside is gone, Jennie is the only heir. Those woolen mills are too fine a thing for a mortgage like that to take. A man may just as well take those things into consideration when he chooses a wife."

Henry Parsons wheeled from his place at the window and faced his father with a peculiar expression on his face. 'I have no desire to 'get in' there, father,' he said with a slight tone of anger in his voice. His father frowned. Stormy scenes between them had begun in the boy's childhood, and Squire Parsons did not desire they should be renewed so quickly upon his return. Moreover, Squire Parsons was not accustomed to having his plans fail or of having others not concur with his arrangements, hence the frown.

"Why not?" he questioned, battling to keep control of a temper which always flamed quickly in the sanctity of his own home.

"Because I don't," the young man answered, taking his stand once more at the window and resuming his tune. Henry Parsons knew his father, knew him well; and the very tenseness of the atmosphere told him that one of their old-time quarrels was brewing. It was such a scene that had terminated in his departure several years before. During the interval, his father had cheerfully granted him an allowance as payment for the peace to be obtained by his absence.

"Now see here, Henry," Squire Parsons began, striving to maintain the smoothness of his tone, yet the grayish pallor which overspread his face belied the calmness of his exterior. 'Let us talk this thing over calmly. Jennie Burnside is a beautiful girl.'

"I know she is," Henry Parsons responded.

"Furthermore, it is necessary for you to marry some woman with means, for you are fully aware that you will never be able to make your own way in the world."

The young man recoiled before the words of his father. It was evident a tender spot had been reached.

"Whose fault is it?" he questioned darkly. "I am just what you have made me."

"That being true," Squire Parsons went on not heeding his son's remark, "you will need to marry in that station which will not make effort on your part necessary."

"Father," the young man turned and strode to the center of the room where he faced his father, the light of unfeigned anger in his eyes. "I know I'm no good, but I'll tell you one thing; I'd rather go out there and dig in a ditch for my living than go on being forever a good-for-nothing who can neither respect himself nor demand respect from others."

"That sounds very nice," Squire Parsons sneered, "but I'll tell you one thing; no son of mine digs in any ditch. I've labored too long to build up my name for that."

"Well, you needn't fear," his son asserted: "no decent ditch foreman would give me a job if I asked for one."

You've done your work too well for that."

"Now look here, Henry." The squire's voice trembled as he spoke. "That kind of talk won't get us anywhere. I'm going to tell you frankly that your marriage to Jennie Burnside is necessary. I told you a moment ago something of Marion Burnside's financial standing. My own is little better, and I have given this matter a lot of thought. Some money has to be made and made quickly to save us both. Your marriage to Jennie Burnside would make this possible. We've got to get hold of some stock Jennie Burnside owns. I didn't intend to tell you this and would not if it had not become necessary. We've got to have that stock or we'll go to The wall, and then where will you be?"

"What have you and Burnside been doing?" his son questioned unsympathetically. "You must have made some bad moves somewhere."

"That has no bearing whatever on this question," the other answered. "The point is that the stock which Jennie Burnside owns is our only means of extricating ourselves."

"Then why don't you buy it?" the young man questioned again. "It can't be worth much to her. I think she would be anxious to assist her father. All you would need to do would be to explain the situation. I can't see what more you'd want."

"We can't do that," his father answered. "She wouldn't sell it if she could; she's too much like her mother for that. Neither can she sell if she would. That's provided in the will. The plan I have outlined to you is the only way. As it stands we can neither buy nor control."

"Have you asked her to use her voting power with you? She could at least do that."

"She won't," he said, growing impatient under his son's questions. His stock of patience had never been abundant; also in this case he wished to avoid too full an explanation. Henry Parsons was not to be put off so easily.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I have told you before that she is just like her mother. Marion Burnside's wife was the most obstinate woman I ever met."

"Yet," his son went on coldly, "you seem anxious to get one 'just like her' into the family."

The old man's frame trembled with suppressed rage.

"We must control that stock," he said.

"I can't see where my marrying her would help out any," the young man went on. "I wouldn't own the stock any more than I do now."

"Under the laws of this state," his father explained, "a married woman has practically no legal rights. Her husband can control her property."

"Well, I'd call that a rotten law," the son declared. "Why don't you introduce a bill into the legislature to change it?"

"Because I don't want it changed," Squire Parsons returned. "We want control of that stock; we must have it, and if that law is changed we can never get it. No, sir, we are very well satisfied as it is."

"Jennie thinks, evidently, that you want to do something crooked and doesn't want to be a partner to it."

The parent's agitation was ill concealed.

"And you want me to marry a woman to get control of her property?"

"It's the only way."

Henry Parsons looked at his father with a level eye. When he spoke his voice was low but contained the same level quality.

"I won't do it."

"Henry," Squire Parsons sprang to his feet, "think well what you are saying. It will mean your own ruin as well as mine. Think well what you say."

"I know perfectly well what I am saying," the young man answered. "I mean it- every word. You spoke the truth a moment ago when you placed me in the 'no-good' class. I'm no good; I'll acknowledge that; but I'm not low down. I'll not marry any woman to make it legal to steal her property."

"Henry!"

"I don't care; that's what it is; theft, legalized theft; the worst type of theft in the world. To do what you ask would steal both her life and her property. Jennie Burnside doesn't care for me and never would. If I loved her I wouldn't marry her under those circumstances."

Every vestige of control fled. Squire Parsons paced the floor in impotent rage, his frame and the muscles of his face trembling with the fullness of it.

Henry had never seen his father like that, and while he appeared calm, his own nerves and muscles were tense under the strain. He did not know that his hands were clenched until the nails penetrated the flesh, or that his teeth came together like a vice.

The old man's fury gathered momentum as time passed, and finally entered that stage where his flesh was cold and

his nerves quiet with a cold, calculating stillness: that stage where men of certain type do murder, and others wreck the lives of their victims in other ways; the stage which no man enters and passes without harm.

"You have sealed your own doom," he said after a time. "By your own words is your allowance stopped. You are on your own resources. This house is no longer your home."

The expression of the young man's face did not change but his heart sank at the words uttered in that cold, hard voice. Henry Parsons had never met the world in combat, and in truth, he was afraid. The nails of his fingers went deeper into the soft flesh of his hands, and he leaned against the mantel to hide the extent of his feelings.

"It shall be as you say," he answered finally, and without another word left the room.

As the moments passed, Squire Parsons' face lost its pallor of anger, and his features settled into the expression of one who had played for high stakes and lost. The lines of his face deepened, his shoulders drooped. He dropped into a chair before his desk, and his hands fell with a hopeless gesture on a paper before him. He looked at it as though it possessed a peculiar personality.

"Ruin," he muttered. "You are determined to ruin me. Only six months, six months to win again what it has taken a lifetime to gain. How can I do it? How can I do it?"

In the mind of the man there was no thought of the boy who had passed out of his home. There had been no love, consequently there was no pang at parting. The wealth he had built around him claimed the love of his life, and with the danger of that slipping from him there remained no room in his thoughts of lesser things.

When Henry Parsons left his father's library, it was with a heavy heart. The alert servant, perceiving his intention of going out, brought his hat, coat, cane, and gloves. The young man took the coat and scrambled into it unassisted. The well-trained attendant did not show the surprise he felt. 'With impenetrable face he extended the cane and gloves. These were waved aside.

"I don't want them, James," he said. "While I am gone," he continued, taking his hat, "I wish you would pack my trunk again. Have it ready for removal this evening."

"Very well, sir," was the response, and the young man was gone.

The puzzled servant, watched him descend the marble steps, pass the granite pillars which marked the entrance to the grounds, and walk off rapidly down the maple-shaded avenue.

When he reached the corner, young Parsons did a strange thing. Leaving the town, he climbed the hill, taking the walk heading to the cemetery. He was not conscious of the distance he covered, but walked as one in a dream. He passed through the swinging gate and made his way over the graveled walk to the most magnificent monument in the city of graves. Here he paused and laid his hand on the cold, chiseled form of a woman which topped the headstone. Those who remembered his mother said the likeness was good. Rumor had it that the sculpturing, done by a master from a splendid engraving, had cost his father a small fortune. But to the heart of the man who had come to this strange spot for sympathy, it returned only the chill and hardness of stone. He dropped to his knees by the side of the grave and buried his face among the flowers. Here he felt nearer to the presence of the woman he could just remember.

"Would it have been different, mother, if you had been here?" he questioned. "Would you have taught me to be worth something in the world?"

The flowers raised their faces bravely to him and breathed out their perfume in calmness. The grasses at his feet waved softly in the breezes that stirred, and the notes of the bird singing in the tree above him blended with the stillness.

"You would have courage if you were here, mother," he murmured, passing his hand caressingly over the grave. "I know you would be brave, but I'm afraid, mother, and I'm a man. A man, afraid! I'm ashamed, mother, but I'm afraid."

After a time the gentle quiet of the place, eloquent in its suggestion of rest and peace, crept into his being, and his communion with the departed ceased.

He took a knife from his pocket and began carefully to uproot some weeds just beginning to show among the well kept grasses. The task gave him comfort. It was the first time it had ever been performed by other than the hands of the servant. After a time his mind cleared, and he was able to consider his situation in life. The prospects before him seemed dark, and his face was troubled. An old habit, born in childhood, brought a keen desire to confide in his boyhood friend.

"How do you do?"

Henry Parsons looked up in surprise. He could scarcely believe that the immediate subject of his thoughts had spoken to him. Yet, as the girl stood before him, her soft brown hair in gentle confusion beneath the folds of a homemade but dainty sunshade, he thought her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Exquisite ladies in elegant gowns seemed insignificant when compared with the simple, unconscious beauty of the gingham-clad girl with her bucket and spade.

"Cynthia, what are you doing here?"

The girl laughed softly. She had not failed to note the tone of gladness which accompanied the words and knew she was not unwelcome.

"Evidently my task is similar to your own," she responded. "I have been tending father's grave."

"It's the first time," he acknowledged, "I ever tended mother's."

"I always tend father's," she said. "I wouldn't think of letting anyone else do it, even if I were able to hire it done. Don't you think they would rather we did it?"

"Yes," he said, "I think they would."

"Aren't these flowers beautiful?" he asked after a moment's silence, raising the face of the one nearest for her inspection.

"I didn't know father had a servant capable of raising them."

The girl's face flushed; she opened her mouth to speak, but the words did not come. The meaning of her confusion came over him suddenly.

"Cynthia," he questioned, "did you do it? Did you plant the flowers on mother's grave?"

"Well, you see," she defended, the flush deepening painfully, "you were not here to do it, and the servants can never do those things well. When I came here to look after father's grave, it was no trouble to look after the flowers on your mother's grave as well."

A great emotion swelled up in the young man's heart. He leaned once more against the graven image of the woman, but his eyes and thoughts were on the other woman before him. The girl had turned her face away, yet he could see its expression of shame that he had found out.

"I didn't think you would ever know," she faltered.

"Cynthia," he murmured at last, "Cynthia."

"Henry," she pleaded, raising her eyes filled with tears to his face, "I didn't mean any harm. I know it wasn't my affair, but the grave always seemed so lonesome without the flowers. It was the loneliest grave in the whole churchyard."

He reached out suddenly and drew the girl to his side.

"Cynthia," he repeated, "I haven't words to thank you. There is not a word in the whole English language that will express my thankfulness to you. It isn't for this one thing alone, but for all the things you have done and for all you have meant to me. Can you think, Cynthia, what it means to a man whom nobody really loves, to have one person in the world who has had faith in him? I didn't know, when I was away, what had become of you, but even when I forgot, your influence never left me. When I came back and found you at the Burnside home yesterday, the wonder of it has been with me ever since. I don't amount to anything now," his voice broke, and his head dropped lower as he made the confession, "but if I ever do, the credit will be all yours, dear girl."

"Hush, Henry," the girl commanded gently; "you must not say those things about yourself. You must not. A man's worth does not depend on what he has done but upon what he is capable of doing, what he will do. You cannot estimate your own worth. Your whole life is before you- an untrained, uncultivated field. What do you know of its value? It will not be wasted, I'm sure. As to the other, I have done nothing. All that you credit to me is the striving of your own personality. The credit is your own."

The young man laughed, and there was a note of gladness in his laughing.

"You don't understand, Cynthia," he said.

"I think I do understand," the girl continued, as she loosened his hold on her arm. "'Don't you think I knew you well enough in those old days, to know you would never be quite content with a useless life? Don't you think I knew that something within yourself would be striving always to bring you above those things, into a life of active usefulness? Don't you think I can understand how that unconscious striving would make you discontented and you would not know always the cause of your discontent? Yes, Henry, I think I do understand.'"

"I believe you do," he said: "and, Cynthia, if I ever succeed, it will be because of the courage I get from thinking you do understand."

"Have it your own way, Henry," the girl laughed, as he brushed a speck of dust from the foot of the monument, and the man forgot his troubles in watching the dimples come and go in her cheeks.

"What would you think, Cynthia," he asked after a moment's silence, "if I told you that father had run me away home?"

The girl's eyes opened wide.

"Not seriously?" she questioned.

"Seriously," he returned.

"Why should he do that?"

"Oh," the young man laughed a trifle bitterly, "I don't seem to agree with his plans; that was all."

"Henry, tell me," she questioned; "did it have anything to do with Jennie Burnside?"

"How did you know?" he asked. "Have they mentioned it to Jennie? Did she tell you?"

"No, Jennie didn't tell me, but Jennie knows. She knew before you came home."

"Does she think I am into that kind of a game? Did she think that was why I went over yesterday?"

"Jennie knows you had nothing to do with it. We both knew you wouldn't do it. Jennie isn't narrow."

"I regret very much that such a thing should happen."

"What are you going to do now?" the girl went on. "Where are you going?"

"I haven't decided yet," he answered. "I don't really know what I can do. I'm willing to work, but I don't know how. I don't know what to do."

"I don't think you can get work here," the girl said. "The woolen mills are all that employ men, and Marion Burnside runs them. He and your father are together in these plans. He wouldn't employ you."

"No," the young man said, "I hadn't expected that. Besides, do you understand what a blow it would be to father's pride to have me work in this town?"

"Forget your father's pride," Cynthia admonished earnestly. "If you must earn a living, earn it where and how you can. The best thing that could happen to men like your father and Marion Burnside would be for their pride to receive a blow that would knock it completely from under them. It would hurt for a while, but they'd be more human because of it. Let's go to the seat in the bower there and plan what you had better do. Do you remember the games we used to have at that spot?"

"I think that's the place," he said, laughing, "where I almost scalped you, playing Indian."

"It is," she affirmed, "and I didn't speak to you for fully five minutes."

"It doesn't seem so long ago, does it?" he asked, as he held aside a bunch of roses to make room for her.

"Now the first question to determine," Cynthia said when they were seated, "is your financial condition. When we know that, we can plan better. How much money have you?"

"Practically none on hand," he said, "I think I have less than thirty dollars."

"Well, I'd call that a great deal," Cynthia replied. "No man's case is hopeless who has that much money. I never see that much at one time, myself."

"Why, Cynthia, that wouldn't last two weeks in a hotel."

"Of course not," she said: "you'll have to quit thinking in hotel terms now."

The girl picked a beautiful red rose which stretched toward her invitingly.

"Do you know where Grandma Mallory lives?": she asked suddenly.

"I think so; a brick house down by the river?"

"Yes," she said, "the brick house with the deep shady lawn. You can get board and room there very reasonable. That will give you time to plan further. Now what other resources have you?"

"I have an income of my own, amounting to forty dollars a month. Father has no interest in that."

"Oh," the girl laughed heartily. "Oh, Henry!"

"Well, what's funny about that?" he asked. "It's small enough, certainly. I'd hate to think there was less of it,"

Cynthia's laughter was uncontrollable.

"Oh," she said again. "I suppose this was a case which required thought. Why, Henry, you're independent. There isn't much you can't do on forty dollars a month."

"Who could live on it?" he asked.

"Why man, it would keep a family," she said, and went off again into a paroxysm of laughter.

"I have a whole lot to learn, I think," he said after awhile.

"Yes, but you'll learn," she said. "How much do you think mother and I live on?"

"I couldn't guess."

"Well, sixty cents a day when we do well; far less when we don't."

"I can't conceive of it," he said.

"No more can I conceive of spending forty dollars a month. That looks like a fortune to me."

"I wish I had trained for a profession," he said. "today I saw Stanley Lakeman making a call, and I wished I, also, could do something useful."

"Why don't you?" she asked.

"How could I?" he questioned. "Father would neither consent nor help me to accomplish it."

"You have your forty dollars," she reminded him. "Many a young man has put himself through school with nothing to start on. You might have to work some to help out, but it could be done."

"If I only could," he said. "I would be more than willing to work, if I could only do it."

"You can," she said. "I'm sure you can." Then a moment later; "What profession would you choose?"

"You won't laugh at me?" he questioned.

"Certainly not."

"I'd like to be an osteopath."

"An osteopath!" she echoed. "Why, Henry, whatever made you come to that conclusion?"

"I've felt that way for a long time," he said. "I've read everything I could find along that line. I've talked with men who are osteopaths. That would be my choice of a profession."

"Then that is the thing you should study. I think you should plan to enter school this fall."

"There's tuition to think about," he ventured.

"I know," she returned, "but the way will open up. You can manage it somehow."

As the girl spoke she arose from her seat. Seeing her intention of leaving, he held aside the blossoms once more for her to pass. As he did so, neither of them saw a stealthy form slip from behind the roses and steal quietly to the fence where a sudden dip in the hill hid them from view.

"You would encourage a confirmed pessimist, Cynthia," he said, and laughed light-heartedly. "I almost feel like a man this minute."

"Henry!" The girl stopped on the graveled walk and stamped her foot emphatically. It was Cynthia's sign of utmost aggravation. "Don't let me ever hear you say those degrading things about yourself again; never! never!"

"Why, I only said I almost felt like a man," he defended with a gay laugh. "That was bragging, Cynthia."

"Henry, you will never grow up," Cynthia said as she passed through the gate, and her laugh was only a shade less gay than his own.

CHAPTER 28

"THE LAND SHADOWING WITH WINGS"

"I'm afraid we will study without Stanley tonight," Bill Lakeman remarked as he placed the last chair beside the tables and turned towards the meadows to get the benefit of the evening breezes, which came stealing from the east and lifted the locks of his gray hair playfully as they passed.

"I don't like to do that," Alfred Stewart returned. "Why do you think he cannot be with us?"

"He has a bad case on his hands," the old man returned. "He had his patient removed to the hospital tonight. He may get away, but it's doubtful."

"We'll hope for the best," Alfred said.

"Here comes Jennie now," Bill Lakeman said. "Watch her ride; she seems to have grown up on that horse. Did you ever see a more graceful rider?"

"She rides beautifully," Alfred answered.

Jennie galloped to the gate and slipped from the saddle almost before the pony had stopped. She lifted her hand in playful greeting to the pair by the honeysuckle.

"Evening again," she said, as she came up, "a perfectly delightful study evening. Don't you think so, Mr. Lakeman?"

"Mighty fine, the old man agreed. "If this breeze keeps up we'll study indoors tomorrow night."

"Oh, don't predict such a thing," Jennie begged. "We don't want rain while these study evenings last."

"It isn't always what we want," Bill Lakeman ventured, laughing; "it's what we get."

"Who is that coming with Mr. Bennett?" Jennie asked. "Isn't she charming?"

"Mrs. Bennett!" Alfred said, in a tone of surprise. "How is it possible?"

A look of comprehension illuminated Bill Lakeman's face.

"Now we know," he said, "where Sophronia has gone. Well, I'm glad she did it," he added to himself. "I'm glad she did it."

When Mary Bennett was introduced to Bill Lakeman and Jennie, she met them with a quiet grace and gentle self-possession, which sat becomingly on her. Yet, truth to tell, it was with a sinking heart that she took the chair beside Jennie Burnside, for Jennie was tonight arrayed in an elaborately beautiful riding habit, while Mary Bennett wore a simple cotton frock, mended and remended, which represented the best of her collection. Jennie Burnside felt this, and her own face burned with self-reproach. She wished heartily that pride had not so overcome her better judgment.

When the prayer was over, Jennie unfastened the rose which adorned her bodice and gave it to Mary Bennett. It was a trivial thing, yet to the starved heart of the woman, it meant much. Her eyes lighted with thankfulness. Impulsively Jennie reached for her hand lying idly beneath the table and pressed it warmly. The matter of dress was

forgotten, swallowed up in a flood which warmed their hearts with a deep, new friendship.

"We were studying last night," Alfred was saying, "the apostasy of the church. We read the description of the church as seen in a vision by John the Revelator; crowned with twelve stars and clothed with the sun. We followed the vision until her child was taken from her, back to God, and the church passed into the wilderness.

"In its place there was established in Rome, on the back of the dragon, a church that the world has considered the church of Christ. However, John the Revelator spoke of her as 'a woman,' not 'the woman' of whom he had just been talking. That was--"

"Well, I guess you don't study without me," a cheerful voice interrupted as Stanley Lakeman slipped into his chair.

"I'm not going to the foot of the class by an absent mark. Not I! You may continue your sermon now, Mr. Preacher. I'm here to see that you don't teach this people anything by the truth."

"And glad we are of it," Alfred responded warmly. "We feared it would be necessary to study without you." Stanley's face was suddenly serious.

"I feared so myself," he said. Then aside in answer to the question in his father's eyes; "Bad," he said. "I can't stay away long."

"The midnight of darkness," Alfred resumed, "which followed the departure of the church and enveloped the world, hiding for a time from the view of men the simple truth of the gospel, had not come unannounced. The Lord of the earth, the Master of the vineyard, was not unprepared for it. In our study tonight we wish to take up that phase of the situation- the preparation of the Lord for the preservation of his truth.

"Our foundation is a sentence found in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew and the forty-second verse;

" 'This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.' "

" In this connection we will ask Mr. Lakeman to read Matthew 21:41."

" 'They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.' "

"The verses preceding," Alfred said, "show us this: The Lord, sincerely desiring the good of the vineyard, had placed it in charge of laborers or husbandmen. From time to time he sent messengers to these husbandmen to assist and instruct them. Each time the messenger was stoned and killed, until at last in one great effort the master of the vineyard sent his son. When the son was killed also, he swore in his wrath that he would destroy those husbandmen and let out his vineyard to others."

"Do you not think," Jennie asked, "that refers to the rejection of the Jews as a nation and the gospel being given to the Gentiles?"

"Yes," Alfred returned, "I think it does. Yet it is quiet evident that the rejection of the Jews was not a permanent rejection. They were rejected for a time. We learn this from Luke 21:24. You may read it, Miss Burnside."

" 'And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' "

" Later we will go further into this phase of the question. At present it is enough for us to know that the position of laborers or husbandmen for the vineyard was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles."

"I don't know whether I just get all of that or not," Stanley observed.

"It is like this," Alfred explained: "The gospel of the Lord was given into the hands of the Israelites, not for their good alone, but that they might be husbandmen to the entire vineyard, the world. It was not the plan of God that only those known as the 'chosen people' should be saved, but rather, that they might be instruments in his hands in bringing salvation to the entire world. This they failed to do, although the Lord labored with them long and faithfully. At last he declared in desperation, I would let the vineyard out to other 'husbandmen.' He tells us this in different language in Jeremiah 11:16,17, where speaking of the Israelites, the nations of Judah and Israel, he says:

" 'The Lord called thy name, a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit; with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.' "

"Now let us turn to Romans 11:17. We will notice that the apostle is speaking to those other husbandmen, the Gentiles, to whom the vineyard was given. We have just read of the breaking off of some of the branches of the olive tree. We learn in the verses we are about to read, what takes their place. Perhaps you will read, Mrs. Bennett?"

" 'And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; ...' "

"So the gospel was to the Gentiles--"

"Well, boy," Bill Lakeman spoke up, "you may not know it, but you are getting the Lord into an awful fix. What you say is true enough, but it looks like this to me: The Lord chose a people, the Jews, to do his work, but they failed right along. Didn't they fail?"

Alfred nodded.

“Yes, sir, they failed,” the old man reaffirmed, “and he took the gospel from them, scattered what he didn’t kill, and gave the gospel to the Gentiles. Now, how much better off was he? How long did the Gentiles have it till they did just as bad? Our study last night showed that they had turned his church inside out in less than five centuries. We left the church last night in the hands of the Gentiles, rejected of the Lord, and lost in the wilderness. Yes, sir, it looks to me as if everything had gone bad on the hands of the Lord. His chosen people rejected and scattered, the church among the Gentiles in the same fix. It couldn’t be much worse, boy; it couldn’t be much worse.”

“You are right, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred answered. “Affairs had come to that point where the Devil seems to have won all around. That is why I made the statement in the beginning of this study, ‘It had not come unannounced.’ The Lord had been making preparation secretly for the time when his truth must pass through this period of darkness, which to this day we speak of as the Dark Ages. He had been preparing to bring his truth through this period of darkness triumphant that, when it had passed through the darkness, it might shine with greater brilliance because of the very darkness. During the remainder of this study I want you to follow very closely.

“This preparation began long before the day of darkness. We get our first glimpse of it from the seventeenth chapter of Ezekiel.

“Before we read I want to call to your mind certain points of history which will help us in our consideration.

“The Lord had brought the hosts of Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand. He had settled them in the land of Canaan and there undertook to educate them into usefulness for his work. When we read the history, we are appalled at their failure to absorb his teachings, As time went on, they rebelled against his form of government and demanded a king,. Three kings ruled over the twelve tribes, Saul, David, and Solomon. After Solomon’s death, civil war broke out and the kingdom was divided. Approximately ten tribes formed into the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, while the others became the kingdom of Judah, or the Jewish people . As time went on and the people forgot God, the Assyrians took the kingdom of Israel, and carried them captive into Assyria. Thus was brought about the loss of the ten tribes, for from that time on their whereabouts was unknown to the world.

“Later when the people of Judah became so wicked that the Lord no longer protected them, the king of Babylon took Jerusalem; and the Jews entered into their famous seventy years of captivity.

“Now the Lord pictured all this through his prophet. It is this picture we will study. Ezekiel 17; 3; Stanley, read, please.”

“ ‘And say, Thus saith the Lord God; A great eagle with great wings., long winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar.’ “

“That is the Lord’s way of telling us of the carrying away captive the nation of Israel into Assyria. Now for the other part of the picture. Miss Burnside, please read the first part of the seventh verse.

“ ‘There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers.’ ”

“Now, Mr. Bennett, the explanation is found in verse twelve. Read it, please.”

“ ‘Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? Tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon.’ “

“ We learn from this verse in connection with verse sixteen, where the Lord tells the king that he shall die in the land of Babylon, that the topmost branches, the kings, princes, and nobles, shall there in captivity consider the trespasses which they have trespassed against him.

“Thus the Lord faced once more the evidence of man’s unwillingness to serve him. Had it been man’s doings they would have given up in despair and said, ‘ It is of no use.’ Not so with God; he grieved for his people (Psalm 95:10) and did what he could to save the truth resident with them. For although first Israel, the ten tribes of the chosen people, and later Judah, the remaining two tribes, were broken down because of transgression, and carried captive into heathen lands, yet the Lord did that which thwarted the designs of the eagle. I shall read from Ezekiel 17: 22. Listen:

“ ‘Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from upon an high mountain and eminent.’

“You will see by the preceding verse that the king, Zedekiah, is the one-referred to there in the phrase, ‘ I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one.’ While the kings and the princes who had reached maturity were carried into Babylon, there to die or to spend their days in captivity, yet the Lord declares here that he will save one of the kings’ household- his young twigs- from such a fate. Young and tender, perhaps too young to serve in the armies, and of little consequence in the sight of men, yet the hand of the Lord was over this tender one, and the Lord would not permit that he should fall into the clutches of the eagle. He tells us rather that he will remove him and establish him upon a high mountain and eminent.”

“Do you think,” Stanley asked, “that in the confusion of the conflict one of the king’s sons was missed and not

carried into Babylon? Is that your thought?"

"Something like that," Alfred answered. "For his own purpose the Lord will lead these away."

"Do you regard that mountain as a literal mountain, Mr. Stewart?" Jennie asked.

"No more," he said, "than I would regard the eagle as a literal eagle. The term 'mountain' or 'mountains' in the Bible is used in three ways other than literal, that is, to designate special lands (Ezekiel 36:1), or nations (Amos 6:1), or peoples forming a nation (Ezekiel 6:2), so this mountain high and eminent is a wonderful land, a strong nation, or a mighty people. Verse twenty-three tells us more of this mountain on which the Lord purposes to plant this twig. Mr. Lakeman, will you read it?"

"'In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar.'" "

"This verse teaches us two things," Alfred commented; "First, that this twig of the Lord's planting should grow into a goodly nation, and second that the land, or mountain, in which they should thus grow, is of the height of Israel. This statement is very significant. From Psalm 68: 16 we learn that the reason for the height of the mountain of Israel is 'this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in.' Now if the eminence of Israel is because it is a choice land and a choice people unto the Lord, then the eminence of this other land or mountain would be for the same reason, for we are told they are equal in 'height.'

"Now let us look for the Lord's reason for clipping off this twig and planting it. Mrs. Bennett, that reason is given in Isaiah 65: 8,9. He is discussing the same subject."

"Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sake that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains."

"That will do," Alfred said. "It has taught us that the Lord has indeed more mountains than one, and that the seed of Jacob and of Judah shall inherit them."

"I'm getting curious," Stanley said, "to know what you are driving at. I always knew that the land of Canaan was supposed to be a choice land, and the Israelites a chosen people, but I never heard of any other land being a choice land. I'd like to know what it is."

"Well, perhaps we can learn," Alfred said. "You may turn Stanley, to Zephaniah 3:10. A peculiar location is mentioned there, and in connection with it the Lord speaks once more of his holy mountain. You may read."

"'From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.'

"'From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,' " Stanley repeated. "Well, where is that? I believe I'll bring my map of the world, my globe. Would that help?"

"Do," Alfred urged.

Stanley was gone a moment and then returned, bearing in his arms a miniature world.

"This used to help me when I studied geography in school," he said, as he set it on the table before them.

"Fine," Alfred continued. "Now we have learned that some of Israel and Judah (the Lord speaks of them as he dispersed) dwelt beyond the rivers of Ethiopia. Mr. Lakeman, from Isaiah 18:1, tells us something more about this land that is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia."

The old man studied the verse carefully, then looked at Alfred with a surprised light in his eyes.

"It says, 'the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.' "

"Very well; now from verse two, tell us how they will travel in order to communicate with the land and people of the prophet."

Again Bill Lakeman studied the verse.

"By vessels on the sea," he answered.

"Then," Alfred continued, "this land mentioned lies over the sea. Now look.

He took before him the globe Stanley had brought.

"The prophet stood here," he said, laying his finger on that part of the globe where the land of Palestine was designated. "By the power of the Spirit of God, he looked out beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which lay here in northern Africa, across the sea over which the vessels would come, and saw in vision the land shadowing with wings. Can you also see his vision?"

"Why," Stanley gasped when he saw it, "it couldn't be. It just couldn't be; America was not discovered yet."

"Not be man," Alfred agreed. "but the great God of the universe knew of that land. He could hardly be expected to overlook the richest, finest land in the whole world. It was not undiscovered by him."

Stanley was silent, studying the picture before him.

"So much is said," Alfred went on, "about the land of Canaan, which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet he did not neglect to mention also in emphatic language that other land which was a 'mountain high and

eminent' to him. A 'mountain' equal in height to 'Israel.' We will turn now to Deuteronomy 33, beginning at the thirteenth verse. Stanley, read, please."

"'And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath.'"

"It is significant," Alfred went on, "that in the blessing of all the tribes, for Joseph only is a special land mentioned- Joseph's land. You will also note that his was a very rich land. Now, Mr. Lakeman, we can learn more of the matter from Genesis 49:26."

"'The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.'"

"I would like to ask," Alfred said, "what had been the blessing of Jacob's progenitors, Abraham and Isaac?"

"They had been promised the land of Canaan for an inheritance," Jennie answered.

"Mr. Lakeman, from the verse you just read, was Jacob's blessing confined to the limit of his progenitors?" No, it seems not," the old man answered. "He says it prevailed above their blessing. "

"Unto where?"

"The utmost bound of the everlasting hills," Stanley supplied.

"Jacob's blessing extended far," Alfred commented. "He aimed to consider this blessing which would reach even 'unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills,' a special blessing. That blessing he placed upon the head of one of his sons. Which one?"

"He placed it upon the head of Joseph." It was Mary Bennett who answered timidly.

"Deuteronomy 33:17 tells us something more about Joseph. Will you read it, Miss Burnside?"

"His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth."

"Every figure of speech used," Alfred said, "suggests distance. Now one more, Mr. Bennett; Genesis 49:22."

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall."

"Stanley, what does the term 'wall' suggest to you?"

Stanley considered the question seriously.

"A wall," he said, "is that which surrounds an enclosure."

"Yes," Alfred said. "Now let us think of this instance a moment. Joseph was the head of two tribes. We are told in the Scriptures that they became a mighty people. Now considering it in the light of a people, what do you think the term 'wall' might represent?"

"It seems to me," Bill Lakeman spoke up, "that it must represent their boundary line."

"Yes," Alfred said, "that which prevented a people from further spreading out. In the case of Joseph, however, the wall did not confine him. His branches 'run over' the wall."

"Now, Mrs. Bennett, turn to Joshua 17:10 and tell us what the border of Joseph's seed, Ephraim and Manasseh, is said to be."

"It says the sea is his border," she answered.

"Very well, then some of the branches were to go over the sea. Now, Stanley, Isaiah 16:8."

"'For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness; her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.'

"I would like to know what all that means," Stanley said.

"What are the 'fields of Heshbon,' and what is the 'vine of Sibmah'?"

"We'll investigate that," Alfred answered, "but first we will ask Mr. Lakeman to read a like statement in Jeremiah 48:32."

"'O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer; thy plants are gone over the sea.'"

"Well, it looks as if someone was going over the sea, all right," Stanley commented.

"Now we will try to answer your question, Stanley," Alfred went on. "Psalm 80:8 tells us that the Lord brought a vine out of Egypt and cast out the heathen and planted it. So Israel is the vine referred to, the people of God."

"Why should he weep for it?" Jennie asked.

"The great eagle of which we read in the earlier part of our study came against it. The lords of the heathen broke down the principal plants. Because they would not hearken unto his word that he might protect them, the Lord wept. Do you remember what the Lord said he would do with the tender twig?"

"He was going to clip it off," answered Jennie, "and plant it."

"He is telling us the same thing in another way. This time he is telling us they are going over the sea. Now, Stanley, we will look up Heshbon. Tell us what you find in Numbers 21:26."

"It says, 'Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites.'

"I don't know any more now than I did before," Stanley complained. "I don't see how a city could go over the sea."

"I don't understand that Heshbon necessarily refers to the city Heshbon alone. Heshbon, under king Sihon, was a strong nation, including provinces ruled over by five other kings. All these constituted Heshbon proper. Now Mr. Bennett, there is a statement in Jeremiah 48:45 which may help us. Will you look it up?"

"They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon.'" "

"Now we have had two lines of thought under consideration," Alfred said. "First, the Lord took from the land of Jerusalem a people, designated as a 'tender twig,' including some of the seed of the king.

"We have found that the Lord scattered his people to a land, 'beyond the rivers of Ethiopia', across the sea, a 'land shadowing with wings.' secondly, we learned that the Lord gave unto Joseph a very rich land and that his branches (posterity) should run over the wall. We found that his boundary (wall) was the sea. We also learned that some did go over the sea."

"That doesn't prove necessarily," Bill Lakeman said, "it was Joseph's seed that went over the sea. Have you any reason for connecting Heshbon with Joseph's seed?"

"Let us see," Alfred answered. "From Numbers 32 and 33 we learn of the dividing of Heshbon and its provinces among the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Can you discover Joseph's seed among any of these?"

"Manasseh was Joseph's son," Jennie said.

"Yes," Alfred said, "Manasseh was Joseph's son, his firstborn. So you see we can show what the Lord referred to when he speaks of Joseph's branches running over the wall – some of the descendants, evidently of the tribe of Manasseh, were led away to occupy in Joseph's land, the land shadowing with wings."

"I want to know something else," Stanley said. "It says back here in Isaiah 16:8, 'they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness; her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.' Now what does this mean, 'they are come unto Jazer'?"

"Turn to Joshua 13:25, Stanley, and you can answer your own question."

"It says, 'their coast was Jazer.'" "

"Yes," Alfred said, "to say, 'they are come unto Jazer,' is equivalent to saying they came to the coast; they went over the sea. Jeremiah goes further and speaks of Jazer as the sea."

"Well, I'll declare," Stanley said as he held his Bible up and inspected it critically, 'there's more in you than I ever dreamed there was."

"Now, listen here," Bill Lakeman said; "it looks to me as if things are in a muddle. It does look as if all this refers to Joseph or his posterity, but where does Zedekiah's branch come in ? Zedekiah was not a descendant of the tribe of Joseph. He was the king of Judah, a descendant of David."

"I'm glad you asked that question, Mr. Lakeman; it is one of the points which needs clearing up. Turn to Jeremiah 49:30,31, and read, please. We will notice while Mr. Lakeman reads that he is discussing the same thing, yet a new element enters into the matter."

" 'Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the Lord; for Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gate nor bars, which dwell alone.' "

"More mystery," Stanley said.

"Not so much mystery," Alfred roused. "It is easy to unravel. Hazor was the head of many kingdoms. King Jabin of Hazor ruled over Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph, but more important he ruled over the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Hivites under Herman in the land of Mizpah.

"When these people were conquered and driven out by the children of Israel, southern Hazor was given to the tribe of Judah, and Hazor of the south became a city of Judah."

"What's bothering me is this," Bill Lakeman took up the point once more: "You've shown us from the Bible when the Lord was going to give a land to Joseph, but now Judah is getting mixed into it, too. I don't understand that."

"Turn, Mr. Lakeman, to Isaiah 65:8 and 9 and read."

" 'Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.' "

"He says he will bring them forth out of Jacob and Judah. Now do you remember upon whose head, or to whom, Jacob's special blessing was transferred?"

"Joseph," the old man answered.

“Also a study of the Bible will show that Joseph was given Reuben’s birthright, and that thus Joseph became Jacob’s firstborn, his successor . In this light the passage suggests that out of Joseph and out of Judah will the inheritor be brought forth.”

“Then you think that descendants of both came over here?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “it seems evident to me that the Lord was leading two peoples to this land. Or it may have been a mixture of these tribes. But as they occupied in the land of Joseph, their tribal identity was lost in Joseph, just as certain other tribes dwelling in Jerusalem lost their tribal identity in Judah. 1 Chronicles 9:3 tells that the children of Benjamin, Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh dwelt in Jerusalem. So it may have been any of this mixture which the Lord led out. But we can trace Manasseh through the prophecies regarding Heshbon and Judah through the seed of the king and by Hazor.”

“That seems remarkable to me,” Stanley said.

“Do you remember our foundation verse, Stanley?” Alfred questioned; “ ‘This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.’ ”

“We have overlooked one consideration,” Alfred went on. “That is our reason for thinking that these people, termed Hazor(Jeremiah 49:31), were to flee also to Joseph’s land. Notice the wording, ‘ Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone.’ ”

“What I can’t see, “ Bill Lakeman said, “is what the Lord expects to accomplish by all this. I can see that it would be a nice thing for these people to be led to safety, but when you started out you were going to show how the Lord intended to preserve his truth through the apostasy of the church and the rejection of the Jews. It seems to me we have drifted from that.”

“Yes Alfred said, “ we have, but we are ready to come back to it very soon. The Lord knew that after the world had passed through its period of darkness, he would need very strong evidence to restore faith, or perhaps I should say ‘the faith’ to the earth. Now he had placed his truth with Israel, his chosen people, and desired that they should cultivate his vineyard, As we said before, they failed, and because they failed, were scattered and rejected. Yet the knowledge of God and the inspiration of God were with these people . The Lord led away these branches in the day of the work of the greatest prophets the world has ever known. Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel were three of the many prophets of that day. So the inspiration of God was with them. Do you remember what the Lord said about it?

“ ‘As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it; so will I do... that I may not destroy them all.’ ”

“They had the blessing of truth and inspiration, but in order to preserve that, it was necessary that they be removed from the contaminating influence of the heathen. So the Lord said, ‘Flee, get thee far off, dwell deep’ (secretly). He wanted them to get ‘far off’ to the rich land, where they could dwell safely, where there were no surrounding warlike kings to harass them, where they would need no walls around their cities (neither gates nor bars), where they would be isolated from the rest of the world(dwell alone).’ ”

Stanley picked up the globe and studied the lands of the world carefully.

“There’s only one place that will answer that description,” he said.

Alfred came and looked over his shoulder.

“And that is,” he affirmed, “ ‘the land shadowing with wings.’ The Lord led them here, that, shut away from the knowledge of the rest of the world, he might preserve his truth and bring it triumphant through the period of darkness.

“It’s a beautiful study, boy,” Bill Lakeman said, “ a beautiful study. But did it, or can it, accomplish that ? It is no new thought that the aborigines of America are of Jewish descent. I have studied archaeology enough to know that strong evidence points that way. But did it accomplish its work? America has been discovered many years. Is the world any nearer a knowledge of God today because the Lord led them here? Did they preserve his truth? It seems to me those people were as far from a knowledge of the truth when they were discovered as the people on the other continent. How do you figure it out?”

“You said a moment ago, Mr. Lakeman, that you had studied American archaeology somewhat. Tell me this: did the highest civilization of these people exist when American was discovered?”

“No, “ the old man answered, “the highest civilization was dead hundreds of years before. The highest civilization at that time, the Aztecs, was only a reflected civilization.”

“It is not the living testimony of the Jews today,” Alfred went on, “that is enlightening the world. It is their written testimony found here in the Bible which God by his power has preserved.

“That old civilization of this continent was gone, Mr. Lakeman; yet as God had preserved the testimony of Judah by his power, so he preserved their testimony.

“Christ said, ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’ ”

“The men of God in times of old left their testimony to us here in the Bible. By it we are told that Jesus is the

Christ and through him comes salvation into the world. While here," Alfred held up another book, 'is the record or history of that old civilization, telling us Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Savior of all men. Thus from two separate, isolated sources come to us the same testimony.

"Just as Judah here gives us his testimony, so does Joseph here give us his, that they too may speak the truth in such unmistakable terms the world need not doubt."

"Is that what the Book of Mormon is?" Bill Lakeman asked. "I always thought it was some kind of a Bible which took the place of this in the minds of those who accepted it."

"There is nothing in the world, Mr. Lakeman, nor ever shall be, which will take the place of the Bible. God has preserved it miraculously that through its teachings the world might learn of him and be saved.

"Yet why should it be counted strange," he went on when the other did not speak, "that as the Lord led them out from the danger of the Old World, these branches of Joseph and Judah, that he should continue to reveal his will unto them, even as he did to their brothers across the waters, or that they, like Judah, should keep a record of those things, that in the time of the world's doubt, the Lord might bring forth that record? And their testimony with the testimony of Judah should show beyond a doubt that Jesus is the Christ."

"Well, it always did seem funny to me," Bill Lakeman said, "that God never spoke to anybody but the Jews. That was one reason I always thought he never really did speak to them. Now if he led those people over here as we have been studying, it would be the most natural thing in the world that he should continue to speak to them as he had done before."

"So it seems to me," Alfred agreed.

"Now, once more let us summarize," he went on. "We studied from the Bible first where God said he would scatter some of his people to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.

"Second, that he had given to Joseph a very rich land."

"Third, that Heshbon, where dwelt many of the children of Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn, should wander through the wilderness and across the sea.

"Fourth, that God would remove or clip from King Zedekiah's household some who would not fall into the clutches of the eagle, the king of Babylon, and that these should be established on a choice mountain or land.

"Fifth, from Hazor also should come a people to a mighty, isolated, rich land.

"Sixth, out of Jacob and Judah should come an inheritor for the mountains.

"Now this book," Alfred continued, "tells us that a company of the tribe of Manasseh, descendants of Joseph, were led from Jerusalem, having been told of the coming destruction of that city and the captivity of the people, and warned of the Lord to flee into the wilderness. We are told how they wandered in the wilderness as the Bible said they would, and at last crossed the sea to the lands now known as America, known to them as 'the choice land.'

"It also tells us of another company, including one of the sons of Zedekiah, which was led by the Lord out of Jerusalem, at the time of its overthrow."

Alfred pulled the globe of the world to him once more and turned it so all could see.

"The first colony I mentioned, the descendants of Joseph," he went on, "landed here in South America on the west coast of Chile, and gradually worked their way north.

"The second colony landed up here on the Isthmus of Panama and drifted south. They finally met and amalgamated, growing into the old civilization. Mr. Lakeman mentioned, or the 'goodly tree' which the Lord promised they should grow into on the mountain, 'high and eminent.'" It is a remarkable evidence of the fulfillment of prophecy, another demonstration of the wonderful harmony of truth.

"The Lord continued to reveal to them his will, and they, like Judah, made the record which gives additional testimony to the truthfulness of the gospel and the comforting assurance that the God of the past still lives."

"Will you let me read that book?" Bill Lakeman asked.

"Gladly," Alfred answered.

"Tomorrow night we will study the coming forth of the church out of the wilderness, and also other prophecies in the Bible regarding the coming forth of this record of Joseph, for the Lord has not left himself without a witness." Once again they parted. Stanley rode as far as the highway with Jennie on his return to the hospital. About an hour later Alfred heard the crunching of buggy wheels in the barnyard and the quiet shutting of a door and knew that Aunt Sophronia had accomplished her mission. Then the scene changed, and he wandered once more through the fields and meadows of his boyhood and basked in the confusion of forgotten memories, while over all the darkness deepened as it settled with a gentle relaxation, and the world slept.

CHAPTER 29

WHEN CONDITIONS CHANGE

Twilight is stealing
Over the Sea;
Shadows are falling
Dark on the lea;
Borne on the night winds
Voices of yore
Come from that far-off shore.

Cynthia sat at her machine where great stacks of half-finished trousers were piled high on each side. Her face was bright and she sang in harmony with the steady hum of her machine, a certain glad quality adding to the usual melody of her tone.

She could not have told why her heart was glad, but for some reason the world seemed very friendly and she felt she had no quarrel with fate. She did not see that three times during the morning the foreman had walked in her direction with the evident intention of speaking to her, but each time as he neared her chair, the frown suddenly deepened on his face and he turned away, muttering darkly. Just at that moment he walked toward her again with the air of a man who would perform an errand quickly ere his courage failed. As he drew near, Cynthia's voice rose above the din of the machine clear and full;

Far away, beyond the starlit skies,
Where the love-light never, never dies,
Gleameth a mansion
Filled with delight
Sweet, happy home so bright.

The man stopped suddenly and raising his foot expressed his feelings by a resounding kick against the side of an unoffending box near him. The box in mute astonishment at the unprovoked assault overturned, littering the floor with the pieces which filled it. Not satisfied, the man kicked again vehemently into the pile of scraps, sending them flying in relays to the opposite side of the room.

"What's the matter with the boss?" one girl inquired of her companion.

"Got an awful grouch on," the other returned cautiously; "better watch your work. There's the whistle." Instantly all was confusion, needles stopped, poised in the air, stitches untaken. Chairs were overturned in the hurry to leave the machines. Trousers legs, half pressed, still steamed, and the cutters' knives stuck in the cloth. The last blast of the whistle had scarcely died away ere the room was deserted. Cynthia Brown was among the last to approach the stairway. The knob of the door was in her hand when the foreman spoke.

"I want to see you a moment, Cynthia," he said.

The girl looked up in surprise, a vague fear clutching at her heart. When he hesitated she voiced her dread.

"What's the matter, Mr. Grey- is- has any of my work come back?"

"No, Cynthia, it hasn't. It never does," he returned, his voice deep in his throat, his face white with indignation. "If it ever did I could understand things better. I've told you before, you've got all the girls beat as far as work is concerned, but regardless of all that, I've got to fire you."

"Fire me!" The girl staggered back against the great rolls of cloth behind her. The color faded from her cheeks, and she caught at the table for support.

"Oh, Mr. Grew, surely not! Why?"

"Why? I'd like to know that myself. I don't know why. I only know I've got orders to fire the best hand I've got, for no reason I can see.

"Don't look like that, Cynthia," he begged. "I'd rather lose my own job than tell you this."

"Mr. Grey, do you - do you know what this means to me?"

"Do I?" he echoed. "I haven't thought of anything else all morning.

"It isn't much of a job," he went on, "but I don't know where you'll get another one. Not in this town."

"Oh," she faltered, "I don't know what I'll do! I don't know what I'll do! I wouldn't care for myself but--"

"I know," he said in crude sympathy "it's your mother. I can't help it, girl: I would if I could."

"Oh, I know, Mr. Grey," she said. "I know it isn't your fault."

"I can't understand it," he said again. "I thought you were on good terms with the old man's family."

"Did Mr. Burnside order me fired?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied; " called me down as soon as he came this morning. Do you know why?"

"Yes," she answered, "I expect I do know why."

"Crooked old snake. I'd like to be able to quite him myself. If it wasn't for my family I would."

"That would do no good, Mr. Grey," Cynthia said. "I don't know what the girls would do if you'd leave here. You must not think of such a thing. When does this take effect? When am I to go?"

"I'll tell you," he said in a confidential tone; "You finish up all that has your number on them. I'll take time at noon to number some for you. That will help a little. I'll try to keep you until Saturday night. It's the best I can do."

"Thank you, Mr. Gray. It will help greatly. I'll have time to think things over before I have to tell mother ."

Again her voice broke and her eyes filled with tears. The foreman swallowed a lump in his own throat.

"If the worst comes to the worst, Cynthia, we'll all help you out," he said.

"Oh, I know," she sobbed, "I know. You've always been good to me, Mr. Gray." She could say no more. He stood at the top and watched her pass down the rickety stairway to the floor below. Passing this she again descended the stairs leading to the lower floor and to the street. Then he faced the direction of the office and shook his fist at an imaginary Marion Burnside.

"If I were half a man," he muttered, "I'd wring your neck."

Cynthia did not go home. She could not at that moment think of facing her mother and explaining the cause of her tears. She wanted most to be alone that she might consider the problem before her and form some plan of action. She was also fighting for control of the tears which flowed in blinding confusion from her eyes, obstructing her vision. She had chosen a narrow walk in the most unfrequented part of town and pulled her white sunshade low over her eyes to hide from a passer-by the fact that she was crying.

Cynthia knew the seriousness of her position; knew that in the little town which had always been her home there was no other means of earning a livelihood open to her. There seemed to be nothing to which she could turn.

"What will I do?" she questioned of herself; yet from the resources of her mind no answer came.

She was unaware that hurrying behind with the evident intention of overtaking her was a young man whose lips were just forming an old-time signal. When she paused at the corner and half turned toward him, something in the expression of her face caused the whistle to die on his lips and he followed in silence.

Cynthia had reached the bisection of the streets and paused a moment in uncertainty. The shimmering waters at the end of the street seemed to call her, and leaving the walk she took the pathway leading to the lake.

The slight pause gave the young man his opportunity, and she had not gone far when a friendly hand grasped her arm detainingly.

"You are some walker," he said laughingly.

She raised startled eyes to him and the laughter died out of his face.

"What's the matter, Cynthia?" he asked. "Has someone hurt your feelings?"

"Worse than that, Henry," she answered. "I've been fired."

"Cynthia Brown!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, "it's true. Marion Burnside ordered Mr. Grey to fire me this morning."

"Why, Cynthia! Why?"

"I don't know unless he found out that I know something of his plans. That's the only thing I can think of."

"Well, I think you're wrong," he said. "Marion Burnside is not the one who is at the bottom of that. It's my father. I discovered last night that he has that skunk of a Tom watching me. Maybe he saw us together yesterday. Father may think you have something to do with my rejection of his kind suggestion in regard to my future."

"Henry," the girl remonstrated, "you're bitter."

"Maybe," he agreed, "but what do you think of it?"

"Surely," she said, "he couldn't think that."

"That's just what he does think," he reasserted.

They had reached the beach and stood on the white sand at the water's edge. The heat of the noonday sun gleamed on the surface of the lake and rolled back, cooled by its contact with the water. A ripple on the surface beneath the shade of a great tree near them told of the frolic of carefree life beneath the surface, and sent out an appeal to the fishermen; but the young people not so inclined did not see, engrossed as they were with the problems of their own existence. Cynthia looked around searchingly.

"Is Tom still watching you?" she asked. "I don't think so," he returned, laughing. "I sent word to father by him that if he didn't quite spying on me, I'd see that he failed to get the next election."

"Henry Parsons! You didn't do that!"

"I did and I meant it," he said from where he stopped to untie a canoe. "I could do it and he knows it."

"Henry," Cynthia asked, "if you should ever get into the legislature as your father is, what would you do?"

He considered the question seriously.

"I would try first to change some laws I know about," he answered. "I don't know what else I would do. I might think differently if I were really there."

A twig snapped suddenly among the willows above them. Young Parsons pushed the canoe he had succeeded in liberating toward her.

"Get in there," he directed and started up the bank in the direction of that sound." If that --
He stopped and laughed boyishly. An old brindle cow, quietly chewing her cud, stepped from among the willows.

"I'll be a first-class criminal if I keep on," he said, as he took his place in the boat, "suspicious of every sound. At least we'll feel better when we get out of hearing."

With the long, sure strokes of an oarsman, he pulled for the center of the lake. As Cynthia let her hand play idly in the water, the cool, white spray raised by her fingers calmed her and she was able to think quietly. Yet as her mind dwelt on the problems of her life she could find no solution.

The young man directed the canoe toward a group of islands in the center of the lake. Reaching them he guided the bark skillfully to where the branches of a large tree stretched over the waters. Here with a swift turn he shot the point of the canoe toward the bank and sprang to the ground almost as soon as the sands grated its bottom.

"Now we can talk," he said as he assisted her from the boat. "I don't think Tom can follow us here."

Cynthia sank to the grass beneath the tree and removed her sunshade, letting the breeze from the lake blow in her face, grateful for the cooling influence.

"What do you intend to do, Cynthia?" Henry Parsons asked after a time.

"I can't tell yet, Henry," she said with more courage than she had felt before. His presence and sympathy gave her strength. "I can't take mother away from here very well, yet I can't see where I can get work here. You know this town and its possibilities along that line."

He nodded understandingly but made no reply. After a time it occurred to Cynthia that there was something of embarrassment in his silence. She looked at him questioningly, and as she did so his gaze dropped to the ground where he pulled absently at the bits of grass beside him.

"Cynthia," he said finally, "will you let me help you?"

"No, Henry," she answered, "I will not. "

"But, Cynthia," he started.

"You are generous, Henry, but you can't help here."

"I could, Cynthia."

"But I won't let you."

"Cynthia!"

"There's no use, Henry," she said again; "there's just no use. I will not have assistance from you. You have helped already with your sympathy. That is all you can do."

He toyed with the grasses in silence, then asked abruptly,

"Will you marry me, Cynthia?"

"No, not that either," she returned. "You'll have to give up, Henry. You cannot atone for what your father and Marion Burnside have done."

"Is that the way you regard it, Cynthia?" he asked.

"That's the truth of the matter, Henry. That's what it amounts to."

"Cynthia," he said, "I'm sorry you feel that way. Someday you will know better. This much you must promise; if you come to actual want will you let me know?"

"Yes, Henry," she answered, "in that case, I'll let you know. We must go now; I am to work this afternoon."

He assisted her tenderly to arise. In his face was regret that he had been unable to cope with the situation. The girl's manner was casual, yet her face was flushed, and she did not meet his gaze.

"Cynthia."

"Yes, Henry." She studied carefully a branch of trees at the end of the lake, although she had known every tree from childhood. A certain quality in his voice had deepened the flush on her cheeks and created a panic in her heart.

"When conditions change, may I ask that question again?"

After what seemed an eternity to him, her answer came, barely audible:

"Yes, Henry, when conditions change."

CHAPTER 30

A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER

What do you think of our study prospects for tonight?" Stanley Lakeman asked as he arose and walked to the window where a solid sheet of water spread over the glass, obstructing the view.

"They look slim, don't they?" Alfred Stewart answered from the doorway as he watched the storm. "There's a regular little river where the path was. We need the rain, but I wish it had come two hours later."

"I, too," Stanley said, coming to his side. "I'm not learning any too fast as it is, but we'll have to take what comes."

A sudden shaft of fire danced its way across the heavens and lighted the landscape with its radiance. "How's that for lightning?" Stanley asked, his eyes alight with enthusiasm.

"Some glare!"

"Magnificent," Alfred started, but his voice was lost in the peal of thunder following. When it had passed, Stanley's laugh was drowned by the steady roar of the down pouring rain.

Bill Lakeman coming into the room joined them in the doorway. The enthusiasm in his eyes equaled that of his sons as they watched the willows along the creek far below bend and sway with the fury of the storm. Stanley knew his father's love for nature in action and shared the old man's boyish desire to get out and battle with the forces in operation. He inhaled deeply the scented air.

"Doesn't it smell good?" he commented.

But something else had attracted Bill Lakeman's yes.

"Look, boy," he said, pointing in the direction of the grove "Jumping Jupiter!" Stanley exclaimed. "If it isn't Jennie."

Bill Lakeman stepped into a closet and appeared with a long coat over his arm.

"Here, Stanley," he called as Stanley started out of the door uncovered, "take this coat."

"That girl's got nerve," the old man commented as they watched Stanley slipping and sliding along the clay surface of the path to where Jennie was dismounting at the gate. Stanley led Daisy away to the barn, and Jennie made her way to the house.

"Come in out of the rain," Bill Lakeman urged. "You'll drown."

"Oh, no," Jennie retorted. "Just let me drip here awhile. It's dry behind these ivy vines."

She removed her raincoat, hat and rubber boots and left them beneath the shelter of the porch.

"The water will run off them there," she said.

"I'm surprised you had the courage to face it," Alfred commented as she came in.

"Courage," she echoed laughingly. "The temptation to get out in this rain was too great; I couldn't resist. Also I didn't want to miss the study."

"We promised ourselves last night," Alfred said a short time later when they had gathered around the table and Stanley had closed the door to shut out the noise of the storm, "that we would consider the coming of the church out of the wilderness. That will be the first division of our study."

"That we may more fully comprehend the things we shall study tonight, we will summarize again the conditions as we left them. In our study we have considered the setting up of the church by Christ. We saw the church clothed in power and in communion with heaven. Later we saw it besieged of the Devil, the dragon, and prevailed against. (Daniel 7:21). Thus the church was lost in the wilderness (Revelation 12.) The power of the holy people scattered. (Daniel 12:7)

"That is not all; his chosen people had entered upon their long dispersion. Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles."

"A dark picture, boy," Bill Lakeman commented. "A dark picture."

"Yes," Alfred answered, "it is dark. The Lord in looking forward to it spoke of it as a time when 'darkness should cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.' (Isaiah 60:2) Yet the Lord gives us the encouragement that 'at evening time it shall be light' (Zechariah 14: 7.)

"What do you understand by that?" Jennie asked.

"The answer is found, Stanley, in Psalms 119:130. You might read it."

"It says, 'The entrance of thy words giveth light.' "

"Now verse 105."

" 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' "

"Now we can understand something of the nature of the darkness that was upon the earth. It was, of course, not a literal darkness. The Lord expresses it in a different way in Amos 8: 11. Mr. Lakeman, will you look it up, please?"

"It says the Lord will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, but of hearing the word of the Lord."

"Now, Miss Lakeman, Isaiah 29:10."

“ ‘For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.’ ”

“Do you remember” Alfred asked, “the parable of the two captains? The army of the prince no longer desired the messages sent from the palace of the king, but felt themselves strong enough to fight the battle alone. The world was in that condition. Man trusted himself rather than God. So the Lord sent the famine, not of bread, but that time in the history of the world when he no longer sent his messages. When he covered the prophets and the seers, the result was- darkness. Yet there was to come a time when from among the faithful the Lord would again organize his army and take up the battle against the enemy. (Revelation 17:14.)

“Isaiah 58: 8 tells us ‘Then shall thy light break forth as the morning.’

“Now, Mr. Lakeman, Isaiah 29:14.”

“ ‘Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.’ ”

“Now, Stanley, Habakkuk 1:5.”

“ ‘Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously : for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.’ ”

“I want to couple with that,” Alfred went on, “a statement in Ephesians 1:10 which reads: ‘ That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.’

“Also Acts 3:21: ‘Until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.’ ”

“I’d like to know what you are talking about,” Stanley said.

“I am talking,” Alfred answered him, “about the time when the Lord shall rise to maintain his own cause; when he shall call together the few who are willing to receive his commandments, and shall go again against the enemy to battle; when there shall no more be a famine of hearing the word of the Lord, but when the Lord again shall speak and direct his work as in the days of old; the evening time when it shall be light.

“He shall call his church out of the wilderness. That gospel, the word of God, in the times of the restitution of all things shall be preached once more in the world, and thus the entrance of his word shall dispel the gloom, and at evening time it shall be light.”

“Do you think he will ever do that?” Jennie asked.

“Listen,” Alfred said. “Isaiah 49:22 tells us that in the day when Israel shall be gathered, the Lord will set up a standard to the people(Isaiah 18:3) ; that in the sight of the inhabitants of all the earth he is going to set up an ensign in the mountains.”

“What do you think all that means?” Stanley asked.

“There are three verses in the Bible which I think will explain this matter,” Alfred answered. “The first is Daniel 2:44. Read it, Miss Lakeman, please.”

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.’ ”

“We shall remember that the gospel of Christ is the ensign of salvation, and that his church and his kingdom are synonymous. So we see that the prophets were looking down to that time when his gospel should again be preached, when his church should again be established in the last days.”

“Don’t you think that verse refers to the kingdom set up by Christ when he was here on earth?” Jennie asked.

“No,” Alfred said, “ it could not be. If you will study that vision when you go home, you will see that this kingdom of God will be set up during the time of the kingdoms into which Rome was divided- ‘in the days of these kings.’ That would bring it down to that time commonly known as the latter days.

“He speaks of the same thing in Isaiah 2:2, Mr. Lakeman will you turn and read it please?”

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills.””

“Throughout the Bible,” Alfred continued in explanation, “the kingdoms of the earth, its lands, and people, are spoken of as mountains and hills. Those people who served God and were his people are spoken of as mountains. Those not serving him could not attain to the heights of those who did and are called hills. The Lord is giving us the encouragement to know that although the dragon prevailed for a time over his church and kingdom, yet the time would come, in the last days, when his church would be restored and established in the tops of the mountains and should be exalted above the nations of the world. From his choice lands should his message go.

“That prophet speaks of this great event again in Isaiah 18:3. Miss Burnside, will you read?”

“ ‘All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.’ ”

“Where is this ensign to be lifted up?”

“Just where the Lord said he would establish his kingdom; on the mountains. We learned that there were two mountains equal in height, the mountain of Israel and the land shadowing with wings, Joseph’s land. The Bible goes further; it tells us upon which of these two mountains the ensign is to be raised. One of them was to send out a message, a message that would be of special interest to scattered Israel. A sage that would be of special interest to scattered Israel. A part of the message which their swift running vessels were to bear to the world was:

“ ‘And ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifeth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.’

“Now, Mr. Lakeman, from this eighteenth chapter of Isaiah, tells us which of these two mountains should give that message to the earth.”

“Why,” the old man said thoughtfully, ‘ the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.”

“Yes,” Alfred said. “Now, do you remember a peculiar statement made by Christ when he was on earth: ‘ The first shall be last, and the last shall be first? Christ established his church 1900 years ago on the mountain of Israel. From there it went to scattered Israel and the nations of the earth. In the last days when the mountains of the Lord’s house shall be established, when the ensign is raised, the trumpet blown, it shall not be first upon the mountain of Israel, but upon that other mountain equal in height, the land shadowing with wings, the great American Continent, Joseph’s land. From there Isaiah tells us shall the message go to Israel, and thus ‘the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.’”

“Do you think that all these verses mean the same thing?” Stanley asked. “Is the mountain of the Lord’s house, and the ensign, and the trumpet all the same?”

“I regard it so,” Alfred said, “The gospel of Christ is the trumpet which the Lord is going to blow in the hearing of all the world. (Matthew 24) His church will be restored in its power. Let us turn now to Daniel 2., Mr. Lakeman, will you read, beginning with verse 31 and reading to the 33rd.”

“ ‘Thou, o king, sawest, and behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.’ ”

“That will do. Now notice especially verse 34. Stanley, read.”

“ ‘Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands.’ ”

“That is a peculiar statement,” Alfred said. “A stone cut out without hands. From where? The Bible tells us . Miss Burnside, verse 45. “

“It says the stone was cut out of the mountain.”

“How could a stone be cut out of the mountain without hands? I can’t see that,” Stanley said. “And what is the stone?”

“The same chapter tells us what the stone is,” Alfred answered.” You will find it in verse 44.”

“ ‘And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.’ ”

“Is that the stone? Do you think it means Christ’s church?”

“I do,” Alfred said. “Verse 35 tells us more about the stone. What became of it, Miss Burnside?”

“It became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

“Yes,” Alfred said. “When the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established, in the last days, in the tops of the mountains, its beginning will seem small, just a little stone cut out of the mountain, yet it shall grow until it fills the whole earth. It shall be exalted above the hills.”

“Well, I want to know one thing more,” Stanley said. “What is the meaning of the statement, ‘cut out of the mountain without hands’ ?”

“Simply this, Stanley,” Alfred answered: “Man had nothing to do with the setting up of the kingdom. Human hands were not the power which cut it out of the mountain. God was going to set up his own kingdom. Isaiah said, ‘See ye, when he lifeth up an ensign on the mountains, and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.’ “

“Well, I don’t see how the Lord’s going to do that,” Bill Lakeman spoke up, breaking his silence.

“Listen how; Revelation 14:6:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.’

“Man will not study out, man will not plan the organization of the church of Christ in the last days. Christ himself will send an angel from heaven, commissioned to do that work. An angel shall restore that gospel which Christ said should be preached in all the world for a witness before the end is to come. The kingdom of God will be once more with men, and although the day preceding has been dark, yet ‘the light shall break forth as the morning.’ The land shadowing with wings shall send its message of salvation, and the famine for the word of the Lord shall be broken. ‘At evening time it shall be light,’ the prophet said.

“ ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ’ ”

“I wish he would hurry and come,” Bill Lakeman said in a voice that trembled. “I wish that angel would come.”

“He has come, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred answered, his own voice subdued with feeling, “else how could I declare this message unto you?”

The old man sat up and looked at him questioningly.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred said, “do you think I of myself am able to study out all I have taught you here during these evenings of study?”

“I am not,” he answered his own question. “This is my message: God once more has established his kingdom. He has sent his angel to the earth with the everlasting gospel that in its simplicity and its fullness it might be preached again in the earth. He has organized again his church. He has taken command of his army, and the great dispensation of the restitution of all things has begun.”

“My God,” the old man prayed unconsciously, “I wish it were true.”

“It is true,” the young man went on, his voice deep with the strength of his own conviction. Stanley felt his heart burn and his frame tremble with the power of the words. “I have no apology for coming to you with the statement that God has spoken to the earth again. He said he would do it and has fulfilled his word. He has started his ‘marvelous work and a wonder’ which, like the little stone cut out of the mountain, may seem in the beginning of little consequence, yet will end in the overthrow of wickedness and in the breaking in pieces of man-made institutions and the gathering together in one all things in Christ.

“His church is brought forth out of the wilderness, and as the head, the chief cornerstone, he directs and supports his work. He has restored the organization of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, bishops, deacons, elders, high priests. He is giving as he gave in days gone by, the gifts of the Spirit: prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, miracles, faith, knowledge, wisdom, helps, governments. The church no longer walks in darkness but is illuminated by the light and power of the Spirit. I can’t seem to make my language expressive enough, but I do declare that Christ has established his kingdom as the Bible said he would in the last days and that we are living in his fullness of times.”

“If it were only true,” the old man muttered again. “If it were only true.”

“The Lord has not left himself without a witness,” Alfred went on. “Do you remember the people he had led away and planted on a mountain high and eminent? Do you remember that Christ said, ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established’ That was the great plan of God. Hidden away from each other, the scattered people whom he had chosen to enlighten the world should make their record which, when placed with the record of Judah(the Bible) in the great day of the world's doubt, would testify in unmistakable terms to the truthfulness of the gospel of Christ and the unimpeachably of the word of God.

“There is a prophecy in Ezekiel 37:16, which we will need to consider in this connection. Let us turn to it. Stanley, read, please.”

“Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions.’ ”

“The explanation is given in verse 19.’

“ ‘Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.’ ”

“You will notice,” Alfred commented, “from verse 16, that the Lord commanded the prophet to take two sticks and ‘write upon them,’ showing that the illustration referred to written records. The one for Judah we have here in the Bible, that record of Judah which has been used so long in the hands of the Lord for the enlightenment of the world. Yet what of that other record, the stick of Joseph, which the Lord said he would in the last days use in connection with the record of Judah for the salvation of the world?”

“How were we to get that record? As Mr. Lakeman said last night, America has been discovered many years. The record was not with the Indians when it was discovered. How then was it to come?”

“How can we know?” Stanley asked.

“We must learn from the Bible,” Alfred said, “Miss Burnside, will you read for us a statement from Psalm 85:11?”

“Truth shall spring out of the earth,’ “ Jennie read.

“Let us not forget that,” Alfred went on, “while we study carefully the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah. This is possibly one of the most comprehensive chapters in the whole Bible. The first ten verses cover a great stretch of the world’s history. This is shown by a statement in verse one: ‘Add ye, year to year.’ The picture begins in the city of Jerusalem where the whole great drama started. Just a word is given in passing, yet by that word we see the dispersion of Ariel (Jerusalem). The Lord is showing his Prophet Isaiah the same vision of the future we already have considered from Zephaniah 2, the distress which was coming upon Jerusalem which would end in the great dispersion even beyond the rivers of Ethiopia. Yet the Lord said they should be brought down. Their speech should be low out of the dust. Time passes; year is added to year. That time comes in the history of the world when, Israel scattered and brought low, the Lord ceases for the first time to speak unto man. It is a significant fact that from the beginning until the Christian church went into apostasy somewhere between the third and the sixth centuries, the Lord always spoke to his people on earth. It was as we have said, Isaiah, looking down through future generations, saw that time when the prophets and the seers were covered (Isaiah 29:10), that time when the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was closed.”

“What’s that?” Stanley questioned.

“We are told,” Alfred went on, “in the Book of Revelation that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy. So the prophet saw that time when Christ no longer added to the word the testimony of the spirit of prophecy. The gifts of the gospel were not given; the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was closed. A continuance of the study of Revelation will not show it was not until the angel had flown in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth(Revelation 14:6) that the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (Revelation 15:5), and communication from heaven to earth was once more established . Listen to what followed – Isaiah 29;11:

“ ‘And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot: for it is sealed.’ ”

“Read the next verse, Stanley.”

“ ‘And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.’ ”

“I would not have us forget,” Alfred said, “that we are striving to learn from the Bible the manner in which we may expect the record of Joseph to come. We learned from the Bible (Ezekiel 37: 15) that it was coming . Now we are trying to learn how, that we may recognize it when it comes.

“ ‘The Bible tells us the word of God is truth. We have learned now that truth shall spring out of the ground. We have learned that scattered Ariel (Isaiah 29:2) was to speak out of the dust. We have also learned that in connection with this speaking out of the dust the attention of the world is going to be directed to a book, and that two men are to have to do with its first reading: one, a wise, learned man, who will fail to read it; the other an unlearned man who, through his lack of learning, will also be unable to read it.’ ”

“Well, that’s quite a scope,” Stanley said. “Will the book get read?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “but not by the power of man. Miss Lakeman, verse 14.

“ ‘Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.’ ”

“Now verse 18.”

“ ‘And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.’ ”

“The book will come forth but not by the power of man.’ ”

“And you think that refers to the record of Joseph?”

“Yes,” Alfred answered, “the two choice lands were to give their testimony to the world. And they were both to come to us by the power of God. Although the powers of hell and the ignorance of men have waged war against it, this Bible has come to us, preserved marvelously through the ages. This record of Joseph has come to us in the same way, by the power of God, and they two were to become one in the hands of the Lord in the last days(Ezekiel 37:15,19).

“The Lord was very particular in this matter. He did not want us to make a mistake. So he gave a sign that we might know when the time had arrived and the matter had been fulfilled. The sign is promised in verses 17 and 18 of the chapter we are studying (Isaiah 29) . We will listen while Miss Burnside reads.”

“ ‘Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?’ ”

“That is the sign. Closely following the coming forth of the book ‘Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field.’ ”

“Now let us look once more at Psalm 85:11,12:

“ ‘Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.’

“The two prophets were looking forward to the coming forth of the records of Joseph which were buried in the earth until the time when the Lord saw fit to call them forth. When their speech should be ‘low out of the dust’ and their message should ‘spring out of the earth,’ then the Lord would give us a sign and the land of Palestine should ‘yield her increase.’ By that we were to know the Lord had started his work, that the record of Joseph was among men, for after lying idle and desolate for hundreds of years the land of Lebanon was to be fruitful again.”

“Well, the Lord must have started his work then,” Bill Lakeman said, “for that land is fruitful. The rain began to fall there before the war. That land’s not desolate now.”

“No,” Alfred said, “that land is no longer desolate. The Lord has confirmed his work. He said he would do a marvelous work and a wonder, he would bring truth out of the ground and cause scattered Ariel to speak out of the dust: that the deaf should hear the words of the book and the eyes blinded by the teachings of the precepts of man should see out of obscurity and out of darkness. When, as it was with you, Mr. Lakeman, men cannot see the way, then the Lord will bring to their aid the testimony of another witness. When, from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, Joseph’s land, should go forth the message, then it was that the stick of Joseph should be used in the hands of the Lord with the stick of Judah to dispel the darkness of the world, that we might know that God liveth.

“You made the statement, Mr. Lakeman, that it looked as if things had gone bad on the hands of the Lord all around: his church in the wilderness, his chosen people rejected, and, I could add, his choice land desolate. But that was not the final scene. From Ezekiel 37 we learn that at the time the two records shall be in God’s hand, Israel shall be gathered back and restored to their own land a united nation. The Lord says (Ezekiel 39:22, 26,28, 29):

“ ‘So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and foreward.....After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me.... Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.’

“So in the final scene, the chosen people will be restored, their land restored to its fertility. More than that, ‘It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills.’

“It has been our privilege, Mr. Lakeman, to live in that ‘dispensation of the fullness of times,’ when he shall ‘gather together in one all things in Christ’: in that glorious time when shall be witnessed the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.

“His people may have drifted. The tide of battle may have gone against his church. His army may have forgotten his counsel for a time. Yet in the ‘time of the restitution of all things,’ ‘these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.’ (Revelation 17:14.)

“The last triumphant picture we have of the church is this: ‘And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready.’

“No, Mr. Lakeman I do not fear, for the final triumph will be with the King of kings and the Lord of lords.”

“Bless his name,” Aunt Sophronia murmured reverently.

As for Bill Lakeman, the tears rolled once more down his furrowed cheeks.

“An old man’s life isn’t much to give him,” he said in a broken voice, “but, oh, I would like to be among those who are called and chosen and faithful. Why, boy, he’s fought a losing game for so long. There hasn’t been anybody to stand by him. It seems as if all the world pulls away from him one way or another. I never understood before what a big fight he was making, and there’s been no one to fight with him.”

“No,” Alfred said, “he has trodden the wine press alone. Yet, Mr. Lakeman, in the end there were those with him who were ‘called, and chosen, and faithful.’ ”

“It’s not much,” the old man muttered, his frame shaking with emotion; “an old man’s life isn’t much to give him. But it’s all I’ve got, Lord; it’s all I’ve got.”

Stanley stepped to his father’s side, not ashamed of the tears which filled his own dark eyes.

“Maybe, father,” he said, “a young man’s life thrown in might help a little. Maybe he’d take us both.”

“God bless you, boy,” the old man said, wringing his son’s hand. “Maybe he would; maybe he would.”

As for Alfred, a joy so great filled his heart that he felt it to be a foretaste of the joy of that great multitude whose voice the apostle had heard, as the voice of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunderings: saying, ‘Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’”

CHAPTER 31

THE GREAT CATASTROPHE

How did you ever succeed in getting to me, Jennie?" Cynthia asked as she pushed back her chair and arose from her machine to greet her friend. "I didn't suppose your father would allow you to speak to me again."

"Father is out of town," Jennie answered, "so I came to see you. I want to know what has happened. Father asked me to have nothing more to do with you, but would give no explanation. I don't understand it, Cynthia, and have no thought of obeying. So long as you need a friend you can depend on me."

"I'm sure of that, Jennie," Cynthia, said gratefully. "Let's go over to the window and I'll tell you all I know. Someone might overhear us here."

They made their way around the scrap boxes and past the humming machines to the window in the rear of the room. Many curious eyes followed them, for some suspicion of Cynthia's disaster was raised in the minds of her fellow workers, and gossip flowed freely.

"Did you know I was fired?" Cynthia asked, when safe in their retreat they breathed gratefully of the fresh air which came to them from the open window.

"Cynthia! Surely my father didn't do that!"

"Well, he and Squire Parsons together did it. I felt dreadful about it at first. I don't see yet what I am to do, but something will turn up. There will be something I can do."

"Yes," Jennie said, "we'll find work for you."

"Do you know, Jennie," Cynthia said, "life never seems quite desolate when we have one friend. You never can guess what a comfort you are to me. You – oh! merciful heavens! Look!"

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Pandemonium reigned. Cynthia's cry was drowned by, or rather amalgamated into the cries and shrieks of others. Jennie had watched idly, as one of the girls arose from her seat and advanced to the door opening into the stairway. Her flesh turned cold and her heart ceased to beat as with the opening of the door a great sheet of flames rolled into the room. Not thinking to shut the door the girl fled screaming to the far end of the room. The omission was fatal. On the strong drafts from the open windows the flames rode on their mission of destruction. With incredible swiftness they licked up the scraps of cloth strewn everywhere and fastened themselves on the oil-soaked woodwork which supported machines.

"Oh, what shall we do?" Jennie moaned. "How will we ever get out?"

Her question remained unanswered. The stairway, the only means of egress, was a solid, crackling mass. Jennie looked to the ground below and knew that jumping was out of the question.

"Jennie," Cynthia's voice was barely audible above the noise made by the panic-stricken shop-girls, "you must help me quiet these girls. They'll be jumping from the windows soon. Oh, Mary, don't do that! You'll be killed."

"I'd rather die!" the girl exclaimed. "I'd a heap rather die than be burned."

"But listen, the fire department will come. They'll take us out."

The girl did not jump but sank to the floor, chattering madly. "There's the fire bell! Jennie called, as above the din and shrieks of those entrapped in the building the metallic tones of the bell reached her. Her mind suddenly cleared and hope returned.

"Oh, if there were only fire escapes," Cynthia wailed. "One hundred fifty girls and no fire escapes!"

"But the fire department, Cynthia, " Jennie urged reassuringly, "Didn't you hear the bell?"

Cynthia only shook her head.

"Jennie, they'll never get half of us out," she said.

"There are only two ladders in town that will reach these windows. The fire chief told me so himself."

"What can we do?" Jennie asked, choking on the black smoke which already filled the room.

"Nothing that I can see, except die when the time comes," Cynthia replied.

The flames crowded them close, All over the room girls were fainting, some falling directly into the fire. Choking and fighting for breath, Jennie and Cynthia succeeded in reaching two such unfortunates and dragged them to the regions of the windows. Many cooler heads were at work and more than one girl was dragged back as she climbed to the sill for the awful plunge.

The news spread rapidly, and by the time the men struggled around the corner with the heavy hose cart, the mass of Leesburg citizens stood wringing their hands in the street below. There were fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters, and lovers whose voices mingled in one mighty wail of helplessness.

The ladders came and were adjusted, and the work of rescue began; but it became evident to those who watched in the street below that Cynthia's statement was true; not half would be saved. Already the flames showed red and seemed to fill the room. Crowded at the windows pleading for help were the faces of loved ones, yet no help was possible, and many a man and woman tore their hair in the strength of their desperation.

In the meantime, Jennie, Cynthia, and others were busy. The closer they were pressed by the flames, the more intense the heat, the more suffocatingly the smoke rolled around them, the more uncontrollable became the craze of fear with which they contended and which they endeavored to soothe.

Finally, eating through from wall to wall, a solid sheet of flames divided the building, and the two girls found themselves with many others cut off from the part where the ladders offered hope. Cynthia saw with a sinking heart that there was not a man among them. Then the thing she most dreaded happened. One of the girls, eluding their watchfulness climbed to the window and leaped to the ground below. Her lifeless body was picked up, with neck broken and skull fractured from its impact with the stone curbing.

"Don't jump, girls. Don't jump," Cynthia pleaded. "Not yet, at least. Give them a chance to get us out first." Cynthia knew that not long her voice would be heeded.

"Help me, Cynthia," Jennie called. "Help me."

Cynthia turned at the cry and saw Jennie almost concealed in the smoke which rolled about her, tugging at a great bolt of the woolen cloth.

"A fire escape," Jennie choked. "We can make a fire escape."

Cynthia did not understand, but together they succeeded in getting the bolt to the window where with the help of others they raised it to the sill.

"Hold tight, girls," Jennie directed. "Don't let it slip from your hands."

The great bolt crashed to the ground, unwinding as it went.

Even then those below did not comprehend the significance of the act. Thinking it was an attempt to save the cloth, two men stooped to pick it up and carry it away from the burning building.

While it was still in their hands a mighty cheer rose from the watchers, as a girl shooting down the sickening incline bumped against them and tumbled to the ground in safety. Then it was that many hands were offered to balance and support the appliance. In rapid succession the girls slid from the inferno above to the haven below, faint as they realized their salvation.

The men at the ladders in the other division were working rapidly. One after another the victims were passed from man to man and deposited in the arms of anxious relatives, yet not until some had received serious burns.

Swiftly as they worked the minutes dragged unendingly to the watchers. From different parts of the building the sounds of falling timber came to them with the awful revelation that the floor was giving way. The flames had eaten through from behind the boiler room, that part of the building was gone already; only over the office and storeroom were there supports remaining. The second floor in this part was rapidly burning. It was a terrible race with death. The heat of the flames seared the faces of the rescuers, and only the bravest, most determined, now dared enter on his mission. One by one others dropped away, overcome by heat and smoke.

Then a new danger was seen by those below. The flames which had confined themselves to the interior were seen to break out around the windows. The sill of the window from which the improvised cloth slide suspended was burning. Rapidly the flames ate their way toward the cloth. The firemen drenched it with their hose, but to no avail. As the cloth gave way strong arms caught the girl who was at that moment making the slide and bore her away.

"How many more are up there?" her rescuer pleaded.

"Only two," she gasped, "Jennie Burnside and Cynthia Brown, who were holding the cloth. "Oh God!" the words broke from the lips of the young man who supported her: nor were they oaths, but the unconscious unknowing prayer of a soul in distress.

"Get a ladder," he begged, "get a ladder quick."

But the ladders were busy and it seemed ages before his prayer was answered. When at last one of the ladders had accomplished its mission, the firemen hurried to the ground to change its location.

"Here! at this window!" many voices directed.

Before it touched the wall a man had half made the Ascension but paused when the window was reached, beaten back by the heat and smoke.

"It's no use," he said. "No living being could get in there."

His words were unheeded. The young man pushed by him on the ladder and started for the tip.

"Henry," the voice of Squire Parsons ordered, "come back here; you'll be killed."

His words fell on deaf ears, yet they were not deaf, for the next words spoken by the voice of a stranger elicited a comprehending nod.

“Go on,” the stranger urged, directly below him. “I’m with you.”

A deathly silence reigned except for the roar of the flames as they leaped, eating their way through the entire building.

Only a moment did Henry Parsons pause at the window as he pulled his coat over his head. He was seen for a moment as though he stood in flames and was then swallowed up in a seething furnace.

The other followed his example, but as he climbed it was seen that he was a cripple and that the knee was used in climbing that a disabled foot might be spared.

The moments which elapsed when they could not be seen were heavy with anxiety and seemed to stop in their passing. Many hearts which had long forgotten to pray were lifted in earnest petition for their welfare. The eternity was broken. The moments marched on. One was seen again, and in his arms the form of a girl. It was noticed with consternation that her clothing was burning, and fear laid its cold hand on the hearts of the people, while the words, “Too late,” were upon their lips.

Unrecognizable in appearance, yet it was seen by the use of the knee in descending that it was the stranger who was safe. Henry Parsons was still within.

Just when the watchers were losing hope, he appeared. By his movements it was known that his strength was almost gone. The tension of the people broke loose in a great, glad cheer, for he, too, bore in his arms a woman, and they knew his efforts had not been in vain. A line of men stood on the ladder, ready to relieve him of his burden. It was well they did, for in his own efforts he staggered as a drunken man and would have fallen had not willing arms conveyed him to the ground: and Squire Parsons, suddenly discovering somewhere in the recesses of his heart a spark of love for his son, raved like a madman.

During this period a new personality had ejected itself as a working element into the events of the day. It was a woman with cool, clear blue eyes and a face which, while not beautiful, inspired confidence. She had evidently just arrived and still carried in her hand a traveling bag. One quick glance had taken in the situation. Her commands came authoritatively and were instantly obeyed. By the time Henry Parsons was borne to the grassy spot where she had directed them to lay the girls, the horses drawing the hospital ambulance rounded the corner on the run and the injured were lifted to the interior.

When Alfred Stewart turned away, the woman laid a detaining hand on his arm.

“Get in,” she directed: “you need attention also, your face is burned, at least.”

“Doctor Lakeman will dress the burns,” he said.

“Doctor Lakeman will be at the hospital,” she answered. “I’ve sent for him.”

When they reached the place, they saw Spider, covered with foam, standing at the door, and Alfred knew that Stanley had preceded them.

The next few hours were busy ones. Alfred, who was only slightly burned, was placed in the care of apprentice nurses while the others were removed to a private ward. Stanley came a moment later with another physician and examined him carefully, giving directions for his care. Before he left he laid his hand for one moment on Alfred’s arm, and Alfred felt a flood of affection sweep over him again for this man who was so recently a stranger. How he had come to love him! He could picture no future for himself in which Stanley Lakeman did not figure. Again, as he had done many times, he sent up an earnest prayer to God in behalf of his new friends.

Not long after, his mind was greatly relieved when a nurse came to him bearing a message scrawled on Stanley’s card.

“None are fatally burned. We’ll have them out soon.”

Then he suddenly realized a great weariness and fell asleep.

CHAPTER 32

THE CIRCLE WIDENS

Although the excitement of the day had fatigued him, Alfred Stewart did not sleep long. The burns on his face and hands gave him no little pain. He arose and moved about the room restlessly, torn between an anxiety to remain and an inclination to go. Bill Lakeman, he knew, would be anxious, but until he himself was assured of Jennie’s condition, he could not leave.

As he stood at the window pondering the situation, Stanley came to him again, and Alfred was glad, for the habitual smile had returned to Stanley's eyes, the usual cheer to his manner, and Alfred knew that all was well.

Stanley came to the window and stood for a moment with his arm on Alfred's shoulder.

"What do you think of her?" he asked.

"Of whom?" Alfred asked stupidly. Then a picture of clear blue eyes which looked out at him under a wide hat came into his mind and he heard again: "Doctor Lakeman will be there; I have sent for him."

"Stanley!" he said; "it's not- "

"Yes, it is," Stanley interrupted, a gleam of pride in his eyes. "The only woman in the world."

"I should have known," Alfred commented. "I should have known when I first saw her. I must have been blind. She is just what I would have expected her to be. I can't see why I didn't know," he ended, laughing. Then his face was very serious. He looked off at the distant hilltop that Stanley might not see his face.

"Is Jennie burned badly?" he asked.

"I came to take you to see her," Stanley answered. "She is painfully burned but not seriously. The nervous strain will have more lasting effect. If it hadn't been for you and Parsons it would have been different. A moment's hesitation would have been fatal in Jennie's case. Her clothing was badly burned. Where did you find them?"

"I can't tell you," Alfred answered, "the smoke was so thick. They were on the floor, at least the one I found was. I can't tell you more. I was afraid we were too late."

"Well, it was fortunate," Stanley said; "extremely so. I can hardly see how they escaped with their lives. Parsons is in a bad way. I thought at first he had inhaled the flames, but I'm glad to say it is not so bad as that. They'll all be out soon. Come now: I told Jennie I would bring you in."

Alfred followed him and stood in a moment by Jennie's bed. Her eyes met his with a smile, and he saw with thankfulness that her face was not burned.

"I would thank you for saving me," she said, laughing, "only I'm not sure which of you did it. Cynthia and I have decided to be equally grateful to you both." Then she added very seriously, "We realize what you both did, the risk you ran. There are some things in life which never can be repaid. We can only leave them as they are. Perhaps you can guess how we feel about them."

"Perhaps I can," Alfred returned, with the light of recollection in his eyes. "In my most helpless hour you came to my assistance. So I am glad to have been near to help you in yours."

"Stewart," Stanley said, coming up, "I want you to meet Miss Langdon."

Alfred found himself looking again into the clear blue eyes which met his own with frank simplicity.

"Hazel," Stanley went on, "Mr. Stewart is a preacher, yet he and I are friends."

"How did it ever happen?" she questioned. "Mr. Stewart, you must be a remarkable man. I never could get Stanley within speaking distance of a preacher."

"Well, you see," Alfred returned, "I got in under false pretenses. He thought I was a tramp. He didn't know I was a preacher until it was too late."

"Oh," she laughed, "that was the way. What denomination are you of, Mr. Stewart?"

"I'm a representative of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," he answered, watching her face closely for evidence of the shadow usually produced by those words.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, and her face gladdened perceptibly.

"I have been among those people," she said, turning to Stanley. "My last two cases were among the Latter Day Saints."

When Alfred had been presented to Cynthia and Henry Parsons, he left them with a message of cheer for Cynthia's mother. He found her in the care of friends, frantic with anxiety, and as he delivered his message, he was very grateful to be the bearer of glad tidings.

"Doctor Lakeman wished me to say that you may visit your daughter tomorrow, between the hours of ten and eleven," he told her on leaving.

For the remainder of the day she was cheered by that promise and took up her duties again with a light heart. Often she murmured: "The Lord be praised for his loving watch care and his tender mercies."

Bill Lakeman had seen Alfred coming and awaited him at the gate. He had heard only the rumors which ran rife through the town, and these were not reassuring.

"All right," Alfred called, seeing the concern on the old man's face. "Everything is all right."

"Thank God, boy," the old man muttered, grasping the hand that was free from bandages, and wringing it earnestly. "Thank God. I guess he does rule after all."

"Yes, he rules," Alfred said, "even if we don't realize it always."

"What would we have done without Jennie?" the old man went on. "I'll tell you, boy, if you hadn't gone up that ladder, I would have gone myself. I prayed then. I'll tell you that was one time old Bill Lakeman prayed."

“Well, I’m thankful, Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred said: “I am certainly thankful that all is as well as it is. Just one life lost. If only that could have been saved.”

“Too bad, too bad,” the old man muttered.

The hospital was besieged with visitors. Hazel Langdon met them at the door and bore a cheering message to each. It was not until Squire Parsons and Marion Burnside came that she allowed anyone to enter.

Marion Burnside looked old, very old, as he stood by Jennie’s bed and gazed down at her. When she realized the lines of care furrowing his face, a great wave of pity filled her heart for the man whose narrowness and blindness had not allowed him to see his obligation toward the lives in his charge.

“If you had obeyed me, Jennie,” were his words of greeting, “you would not be here today.”

“I know, father,” she answered kindly; “also if I had obeyed you, many girls instead of one in your employ would have lost their lives. I have learned, father, that it does not pay to obey a command that is in itself wrong.”

Marion Burnside made no reply. The words of his daughter had deepened the sting which the averted eyes of his friends and neighbors had inflicted. Even the boys on the streets had hooted at him in derision, and he who had been esteemed as the second citizen of Leesburg suddenly found himself an outcast. Why had he not provided fire escapes, or at least an extra stairway? That question to which he could find no answer he could not banish from his mind. Through a long, sleepless night it stalked by his bed and screamed itself in the wind that whistled around his mansion. In one day he had seen the work of his life tumble about his head.

He knew the mortgagees would step in and take over the property which he had hoped to save. And always in the minds of those who had esteemed him he would be branded as criminally negligent.

So it was that for each hour that had passed, a year piled itself on his head- and this morning Marion Burnside was old- the proud arrogance of his nature crushed by the weight of accumulated events of his own making.

“Father!” All this was expressed in the world of sympathy which accompanied the word. Jennie reached out a bandaged hand and slipped it into his own. “We’ll start all over again.”

Then it was that Marion Burnside broke down, and the first real tears of his mature life were shed.

Meanwhile Squire Parsons had spent some awkward moments in the presence of his son. Beyond the words, “How are you?” he seemed unable to go. When the situation became unbearable, he succeeded in asking the question uppermost in his mind:

“Shall I have you moved home, Henry?”

“No, father,” he answered not unkindly. “I think I had better remain here the few days that are necessary.”

Another pause.

“Henry.”

“Yes, father.”

“When you are out, come to see me.”

A refusal framed itself on the young man’s lips, but suddenly a picture came before him. He closed his eyes for a moment and saw the rays of the sun stealing between the leaves of a tree and sending its patches of light dancing around the chiseled form of a woman.

“I will, father,” he said.

Cynthia’s mother was overjoyed when she found that in a few days, as soon as the burns were healed, Cynthia would be with her again as well as ever. When Cynthia voiced her fear for the future, she met the cheerful response: “The Lord has always provided, child; he always will.”

So the unquestioning faith of the mother was transferred to the daughter, and the load of dread was lifted.

Henry Parsons had been assigned to the room adjoining that occupied by the girls, and Hazel Langdon found herself busy spreading cheer from room to room. Before the end of the second day she had completely won the confidence of Henry Parsons as she had previously won that of the girls. As she sat by his bed, he told her of his plans and aspirations and did not know that in doing so he won a valuable ally, for she was already planning ways and means.

“I think you are right,” she said, “In promising to see your father. But in getting through school it is best for you to stand on your own feet as much as possible. Your life work will be more valuable as a result. You can make it nicely,” she assured him.

He had kept nothing back. With perfect simplicity he had told her of his love for Cynthia and his hopes for their future.

“Mr. Parsons,” Hazel said, “why don’t you take her with you?”

“Take Cynthia to school?” he questioned.

“Yes,” she said, “take the course together. She would be splendid in that line and you could work together. Women are needed in those professions.”

He pondered the question seriously.

"If we only could," he said. "Cynthia might not like the plan. Besides, you know, Cynthia never has promised to marry me yet."

"You leave that to me," Hazel laughed. "I mean the part about the course. You'll have to attend personally to the more important matter. I can promise that when the time comes, she will be glad to enter school."

Alfred Stewart, at Stanley's request, spent much time in the hospital.

"I want you," Stanley had said, "to get a chance to tell Hazel the things you have been telling us these evenings." And Alfred found willing ears and a questioning mind.

"Wait a minute," she said as they were talking: "I want them all to hear this."

So three reclining chairs were arranged, three bandaged individuals were made comfortable, and Alfred faced the strangest audience of his life. Yet as he told the story, the influence of the Spirit of God rested on him and added weight to the message. Cynthia and Hazel bombarded him with questions, while Henry Parsons listened as one who hears a new thing.

When a week had passed in this manner, they realized that, burns healed, the time of separation was at hand. Then it came that Cynthia went to Henry Parsons with a question in her eyes.

"What will we do about it, Henry?" she asked.

He studied carefully the trees on the hillside.

"I'm afraid I'd make an awfully poor Christian, Cynthia," he answered her.

"But Henry, the Lord would help you. He promised that."

"I'm afraid, Cynthia, I'd be a discredit to the church."

"But, Henry," Cynthia urged, "considering all that Christ has done, don't we owe him obedience? Isn't it the least we can do? Perhaps we might make others see as well."

When he did not answer Cynthia looked at him pleadingly and was surprised to see a mist of tears in his eyes, and she knew that his battle was won.

"I really want to be a Christian," he said. "I've always wanted to. Yes, Cynthia, I'll try. If you want to be baptized, I'll try it, too. Perhaps that's what indeed, Christ's help."

And Cynthia slipped away in search of Alfred Stewart, She found him busy in conversation with Jennie and Hazel Langdon. So the message she bore must wait its opportunity. As she drew near she heard Hazel say: "I was very much interested in your people down there. I found them to be an earnest, conscientious people, thorough Christians – so different from what I had expected. What I liked most was the love they had for each other. Do you remember the dreadful floods down there this spring?" she went on. "You read of them I suppose. Well, they were terrible. One would have to see them to understand. Homes down on the levee where the poorer classes lived were swept away. Numbers of people lost their lives. There was among the membership of your church living right in the heart of the devastated district, a colored family. I had met them through others of the church members and was very much interested in them. They made the mistake so many others made, of remaining too long in their home, trusting to the water to recede. They all lost their lives but one boy."

"I read it," Alfred said.

"It was a sad affair," Hazel went on; "the influence of it stays with me yet. Some of the members of the church begged them to come to their homes when the water began to rise. "But you know nobody thought it would be so bad, and Mrs. Turner was sick. They thought it best not to move her. The same thing had happened often and they merely moved upstairs until it was over. They thought it would be the same again. That morning when the levee broke and the current came out through that part of the town, the full danger was seen. Mr. Turner took the boy and swam to shore with him. There were not nearly enough boats to get the people out of their homes, and the church people were working hard trying to make a raft to reach the Turners. I stood there with them, watching and hoping they would be in time, when Mr. Turner reached us with the boy. It had been a long, hard swim and they begged him to wait and return for the others with the raft, but he shook his head and said, "No, brothers, she's out there alone."

"I never realized that the Negro people were so human as I did at that moment. I think he knew it was the end, for he gathered the boy in his arms for a moment, then unfastened a locket which had been concealed around his own neck and put it on the boy. We all shed tears and were not ashamed of them. He swam back to the house, but before he could get out with another child, the house and all were swept away."

"Hazel," Jennie asked breathlessly, "did you see that locket? What was on it?"

"Why, yes," Hazel answered. "It bore the boy's name. He was named for his father, Sam Turner."

Jennie was all excitement. "Where is he now? Could we find him?"

"Some of his church people were giving him a home when I left," Hazel answered, not a little puzzled. "I suppose he's with them yet."

"We must send for him," Jennie announced. "We must send for him at once before we lose him."

Then she told them the story as Aunt Maria had told it to her.

“We must have him here,” she ended. “It will be an answer to her lifelong prayer.”

So it happened that Hazel sent the message which added young Sam Turner to the Burnside household and brought the gladness which brightened the closing days of old Aunt Maria’s life. For young Sam Turner with his ready smile won his way into the regard of the people and did no little part in the work accomplished there in the years which followed. Aunt Maria, when she saw him, needed no locket of identification.

“Law, chil’,” she said to Jennie, “don’t I know that face? Ain’t it jes like my Sam?”

When he sang to her the songs taught him by his father, the old songs she loved and around which the memories clung, in the full rich voice which had come down to him from the generations of the past, the old lady’s joy knew no bounds. To her ‘twas the years rolled back and a restoration of her own. She listened to the gospel story as he told it in his quaint way, uncomprehendingly but believably, and so came the peace with the evening which never lifted till the shadows fell.

Cynthia did not find opportunity to deliver her message until Alfred was leaving that evening. He had a quiet conversation with Henry Parsons, and outside he lifted his heart overflowing with gladness to God in thanksgiving for those souls which had been given him.

CHAPTER 33

JENNIE HESITATES

When the girls were alone for the night, Cynthia told Jennie that she and Henry had requested baptism and expected to join the church as soon as they were able to enter the water.

“Why, Cynthia!” Jennie exclaimed, “you’ve been baptized once!”

“I know, Jennie,” Cynthia said. “I’ve thought that all out. I’m going to be baptized again.”

“I can’t see why you should,” Jennie persisted.

“Listen, Jennie,” her friend returned, “you know as well as I that the church we were baptized into teaches only a smattering of the truth, and a lot of the things they teach are not and never were found in the Bible.

“They are not to blame, Jennie; I’m not criticizing them. The trouble is, they are not the custodians of the gospel which John saw the angel bring. They have as much truth as man can figured out, but Jennie, man can’t figure out the truth completely. I lay awake all the other night and thought this matter over. Even if man could figure out the truth from the Bible, that wouldn’t give him the right to act for God unless He told him to. The trouble with the Christian churches is that they think God suddenly became silent. They believe in him all right, but they believe in him as a God of power in the past. According to appearances they seem to think some mysterious agent has shorn him of his power in our own day. If they had believed in a living, acting God of the present, one who never changes, he would have revealed to them the things they failed to understand in his law. Then they would not have divided up into so many kinds of Christian churches. We could all do as Paul instructed the Christians to do in his day ‘Speak the same thing.’

“The majority of the Christians,” Cynthia went on, “don’t want God to speak now. They want him to keep silent and speak to them only from the past, when we should be praying for him to tell us where the trouble lies- to tell us how we can be united again.

“Yes, Jennie, I’m glad, more than glad, to be able to obey the gospel of Christ restored. I’m glad I lived to see this day.”

Jennie made no answer. She felt dazed, depressed. She had received the message gladly but with no thought of obeying it, and she had not known that in her heart, pride held sway. She had not realized that, in her mind, fine church buildings and all that went with them had formed such a necessary part of her religion.

True these had given her no satisfaction of spirit, yet, now that she had found that satisfaction, she had thought to carry it with her in the religious paths she had already walked. So with Cynthia’s words came the battle. She knew Cynthia had spoken the truth, yet her being revolted at the thought of being identified with a religion at once obscure and unpopular. Hazel Langdom came in and turned out the lights, but for Jennie there was no sleep. Her mind, keenly alert, attacked the question from all sides, yet she could not bring herself to consent to take the path chosen by Cynthia.

“Why isn’t my church just as good?” she questioned, and always Cynthia’s words rang in her ears in answer: “They are not the custodians of that gospel which John saw the angel bring.”

As the hours rolled away, she arose from her bed, found her way to the window, and looked out upon the beauties of a moonlit night. The world was quiet, while on high the great round moon rode in majesty and serenity .

She started to pray, yet from somewhere within the inmost recesses of her mind came a warning that if she prayed over this matter the Lord would lead her where she did not desire to go. The prayer on her lips was checked. Yet the answer came in a gentle, saddened voice, whispering itself from the ages of the past: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Then the prayer did come, borne on a flood of tears from the depths of her heart: "O Lord!" she whispered, "help me to know what to do. Help me to see the way."

Suddenly she was standing, not by the hospital window, but at the head of a brilliantly lighted street. As far as the eye could see magnificent temples, cathedrals, and churches lifted their spires to heaven and sent out their calls to man; "Come and worship." Jennie looked from one to the other in confusion.

"Which shall I enter?" she questioned. "In which shall I worship?"

She became aware for the first time that she was not alone. turning she beheld by her side a radiant creature clothed in a garment of unspeakable whiteness. He stood as it seemed in the center of a light which made a shadow of the light surrounding them. She gazed at him in wonder and tried in her mind to find words with which to describe the wonderful beauty of her companion. The hair fell back in shimmering brilliance from a face perfect in feature and kindliness of expression. The bare feet visible below the folds of a snowy garment gleamed like crystal gold. There were no words with which to describe the being. The words of the prophet came to her as she contemplated the feet which barely touched the earth on which he stood." And his feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace."

She knew now why the prophet had used them. Those words came nearer expressing the wonderful beauty she beheld than any she could find. She became aware that he awaited her question.

"Which shall I enter?" she asked again.

"Come," he said, and his voice reminded her of distant music.

As they passed before the most magnificent of the buildings she had contemplated, attracted by the beauty of the place, she felt again a keen desire to enter.

"May we not go here?" she questioned.

The face of the angel saddened.

" 'They have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant.' "

She followed in silence, but as they passed again a beautiful structure from whose decorated windows the picture of the son of God looked, she questioned again timidly: "Here is Christ's picture. Shall we not go here?"

Again as with distant music came the answer: " 'This people draw near unto me with their mouths and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men.

Not daring to question again, Jennie saw with a sinking heart that they were leaving behind the beautiful buildings she had so much wanted to enter and had come to the district of the unpretentious, plain, and humble churches.

"Oh, must I enter one of these?" she questioned of herself. Suddenly from a small building at the end of the street, there came to her, wafted on the breezes, the voice of singing, and she saw the angel smile.

As they drew nearer, the words of the song distinguished themselves, and the warming influence of the Spirit of God settled over her, burning them into her memory:

Organize my church and kingdom
Not in order man approved,
but in that revealed through Jesus,
Your Redeemer whom ye love.

She looked at the angel with a question in her mind which she dared not ask.

"I have chosen the weak things of the world," he answered, "to confound the mighty."

She found herself alone, standing tremblingly before the door of the building, afraid to enter. The songs with their wonderful appeal still came to her from within, and her being thrilled with a sincere desire to join the singers.

As she hesitated and pondered she suddenly became aware that the door was held ajar, and she heard a familiar voice saying: "In the name of Jesus Christ I bid you enter."

She raised a surprised face from the window and looked out once more on the moonlit night. Her being still thrilled with the sweet influence which had come to her with the vision. Her pride was gone. She felt only a deep yearning to follow in the footsteps of the Son of God. What though the way be obscure? What if friends be lost? Surely if Christ himself could walk the way man should not complain.

The thoughts of her heart formed themselves on her lips, and she sang the most sincere prayer of her life:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead thou me on;
 The night is dark and I am far from home,
 Lead thou me on.
 Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
 The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
 Shouldst lead me on;
 I loved to choose and see my path; but now
 Lead thou me on;
 I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
 Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

So long the power hath blest me, sure it still
 Will lead me on
 O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
 The night is gone.
 And with the morn those angel faces smile,
 which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

CHAPTER 34

ALL LOST BUT JENNIE'S SAVINGS

Jennie, "Marion Burnside said the day following that on which Jennie returned from the hospital, "do you feel strong enough to talk over our prospects? The conversation may not be altogether pleasant."

"I feel perfectly strong, father," Jennie," Jennie returned. "I know there must be a number of things which need attention. Also I fancy we must practice the strictest economy until you can rebuild the factory and get it going again. Fortunately the weaving rooms did not burn. We have that much to be thankful for."

Marion Burnside choked. He was finding it even more difficult than he had anticipated. Jennie looked at her father kindly. Since he had visited her in the hospital and she had in a measure shared his burden with him, a new bond of sympathy seemed to exist between them, and she felt she would make any sacrifice for him.

"How much insurance did you carry, father?" she asked. "Enough to help materially in the rebuilding?"

"I can never rebuild, Jennie," he said in an utterly hopeless tone she had never heard him use before. "That fire, coming when it did, has effectually ruined me financially. I have never told you, but the plant, as well as this house, was mortgaged. Those mortgages are due, or practically so. I had plans almost completed whereby I could have remortgaged and, with the help of the added time, redeemed them. Now it is impossible; everything will have to go."

Jennie was for a moment utterly dazed by the information. When she spoke her voice sounded unnatural in her own ears.

"This house!" she exclaimed. "Must this house go, too?"

She hardly knew why she asked it. Yet as she comprehended his words she realized what her surroundings of luxury had come to mean to her. She had never been happy in this house, had realized in a vague way its lack of something essential; yet regardless of all this, its cold beauty was a part of her life, and she knew she would miss it.

"Yes," he answered. "I'm sorry, but it will go also."

"Where will we live?" she questioned.

"I don't know," he replied wearily. "Wherever we can."

Jennie understood now the broken spirit of her father; knew why he had grown so old in the short time she had been away. This man, to whose proud spirit success had meant much, must confess he had failed. It was not alone the loss of the money or its represented value in property. The old Marion Burnside could have replaced these. But the proud spirit which must acknowledge defeat has no strength left with which to fight. Not reinforced by the pride

which has been its stay, it has no inherent strength of its own, and lies limp and broken. So it had been with Marion Burnside, and he cringed in fear before a future in which he could see no hope. Understanding this Jennie longed the more to help him, longed to be the strength on which he might rely in his hour of weakness.

"Is there no way, father?" she asked.

"None whatever," he said. "The insurance papers are made out in favor of the one holding the mortgage. The outstanding accounts will consume the cash on hand. No, there is no way. I hope they will foreclose at once; the sooner it is over and everybody knows, the better."

Unable to talk with her longer, he arose and started for the door.

"I'm sorry, Jennie," he said with his hand on the knob. "I would have spared you all this if I could."

"Why, father," Jennie said, "for myself I don't care. I know I'll get through somehow. but I'm sorry on your account, very sorry."

His head dropped lower, but he made no answer.

Jennie tried to adjust herself to the changed conditions. After a time she arose and made her way slowly up the stairs. She found the trunk and took from it the long-forgotten box. She could not have explained her movements nor feelings. She followed her instincts rather than her mind, and these prompted her to seek counsel from others. Above all things else she felt she must talk to Bill Lakeman. She knew that in the old man's heart was a store of sympathy which never diminished although given so freely. She felt she must do something and that he could help her to know what to do. Once more in her own little parlor, she rang for Tom.

"Bring the carriage for me," she instructed. "I want to drive out awhile."

As he looked at her questioningly, she realized his solicitude.

"I'm quite strong, Tom," she reassured him. "It won't hurt me in the least. "

She placed the box in the carriage, marveling at its weight.

"I did not know I was so weak," she thought.

She found the old man in the meadow not far from the roadway. He did not see her, for at that particular moment a great red and black butterfly swung on the head of a flower near him, then rose majestically and flew away with easy sweeps of its large velvety wings. Jennie hailed him, and the old man looked up in surprise.

"I didn't know you were allowed to be out," he said by way of question.

"I probably am not allowed, but I'm out just the same," Jennie laughed. "And I came to see you, too."

"To see me!" he exclaimed. "Well, now, that's what I call nice. If it had been Stewart now, or even Stanley, I shouldn't be surprised. but an old man like Bill Lakeman!" he ended, laughing heartily at her blushed.

"Now what can I do for you?" he asked in his usual kindly voice.

"You can lend me your wisdom, Mr. Lakeman," she said, "and although I can never repay the loan, yet I am anxious to borrow."

Then she told him why she had come. Told him of her father's financial downfall and of her desires to help.

"There's not much I can do," she ended, "but I brought over all my own money. I don't know how much there is, but I thought we could figure out some way."

Bill Lakeman tied the horse and removed the box she designated to a shady spot beneath an old oak tree near. Together they counted the money.

"I did not suppose there was so much," Jennie said as they finished.

"You're not bad off at all, my girl," Bill Lakeman said. "The money you've saved will be a big help to you now. I know what I would do. I'd buy a small place so I would always be sure of a home."

"I had no idea I could do anything like that," she said, still unable to comprehend what her thoughtless saving had accomplished. "I began putting money in that box- oh, I can't remember how long ago. But I can't realize it could be that much."

"Now, there's your mother's home place," the old man went on after a moment's thought. "You could buy that. It lies right here next to mine, and a living can always be made on it. that would be better than a place downtown."

"Oh, Mr. Lakeman!" she exclaimed. "If I only could! I've always loved that place. Mother always wanted to keep it while she was living, but father wanted a bigger home. If I could only buy it again, I think I would be happy."

"Well, it's for sale," he said, "and you have money enough to buy it."

"Won't you help me make the purchase?" she begged. "Could we go over now?"

Jennie was in ecstasy over the prospect before her. She breathed deeply of the fragrance of the maples as they passed between them on the way to the house, and her eyes wandered out to the old tree where the big rope swing had hung which had been the delight of her childhood visits to the old farm. She knew just where her grandmother had sat in the days gone by, with her knitting, by the low east window overlooking the fields and meadows, and her eyes filled with tears as the memories of the past swept over her.

“Oh, I don’t understand how father could ever have sold it,” she said.

“He couldn’t if he had ever lived here,” Bill Lakeman answered. “Few people can understand that the value of the land and buildings is the least of the value of an old home. Money can buy, replace, and improve these, but the memories and associations that come with the passing of time can never be replaced or duplicated. Their value swallows up and overshadows all others. That’s why I would like to see you take this old place. The price is reasonable and the land good. I would have bought it for Stanley, but his work does not require this kind of home. Someone will buy it; I think you should have the first chance. It was your mother’s girlhood home.”

The purchase was made, and although there was little money left, Jennie was too happy to think of that. With the sense of once more having a home, a feeling of security came to her and she had no fear for the future.

“All my own- my very own,” she murmured as they drove away. Then aloud to Bill Lakeman: “I wish mother could have been here today. How happy she would be.”

“Yes, child,” he said thoughtfully, “In more ways than one.”

And Jennie knew that the old man’s thoughts were not with houses and lands, but rather that he spoke of the richer treasure he had lately found.

“Mr. Lakeman,” she said, “Indirectly mother has helped us all. I at least would never have heard, had I not gone to him with questions of her.”

“Yes,” he said, “I have thought of it. It looks as if the Lord might have cared for us all enough to have planned things for us. I guess he must have known we wanted to believe in him.”

“Are you going to be baptized, Mr. Lakeman?” she asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “It isn’t much the lord has asked us to do. I am certainly willing to do that much.”

“I feel the same way,” she said. “I did feel differently at first, but I’m ashamed of my pride now. I’ve found out that it means something to be able to say, ‘I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.’”

Then she told him of the vision granted her as she pondered the question while in the hospital. Bill Lakeman nodded.

“Now that’s more like it,” she said. “The Lord always did work that way. That’s one thing that made an infidel of me. The Bible said that God never changed, yet I could see he was not working with man as he had done in the past. And I jumped to the conclusion that the whole thing was a hoax and that he never did do it. Now you asked the Lord for light that you needed; he answered your prayer and gave you light. That is the God I like to worship, the God who isn’t deaf and dumb.

“Yes, Jennie,” he went on, “we may lose our property, but we have gained that which is of far greater value, and the world can never take it away.”

A silence fell upon them a silence which carried with it a depth of feeling unknown to them not many weeks before. “Mr. Lakeman,” Jennie said, breaking the silence, “I have a foolish whim.”

He looked at her questioningly.

“I want to be baptized in the evening – just about the hour we have always studied. That’s the time in the day when we learned to know God. That is the time I would like to obey him.”

“I can second the wish myself,” the old man said. “The message came to us as a call at evening. What is more appropriate than that the evening bear our answer? yes, I’d like it myself, and I’ll mention it to Stewart.”

Jennie held out her hand, and as Bill Lakeman took it she felt a bond between them which she had never experienced before in life- a strange bond of common purpose and a relationship closer than the ties of blood. The old man felt it, too, and murmured, “Blest be the tie that binds.”

And each understood the words as only those who have experienced the tie can understand.

That evening she watched anxiously for her father’s return. When she saw him coming, stoop-shouldered and slow, she went to meet him. Her took her arm with the first show of affection she could remember.

“Is all finished?” she asked.

“All ready to be turned over,” he said with a deep sign.

“I’ve picked out a home for us, father,” Jennie went on, her face beaming until the man could not but catch something of her hopefulness.

“Where?” he asked.

“The little farm over by Lakeman’s in the edge of town; mother’s home place. How would you like that?”

“That place has been in my mind all day, Jennie,” he said. “That’s where I married your mother. But it’s no use, Jennie; I couldn’t even pay rent on it unless we sold household furniture to do it.”

“But, father, you don’t understand,” Jennie laughed. “I’ve bought it.”

He stopped in the walk and looked down at her.

“Oh, I know you don’t believe it,” she went on. “But I did. Paid for it, too. I’ve always kept some of the money you have given me, and when we counted it there was enough to buy the place.”

“How could you save that much,” he questioned, “and I not know it? Surely, Jennie-“
“In my trunk,” she laughed, waving aside his fears. “I’ve kept it in my trunk.”
It was significant of the change in the man that he did not scold her.

CHAPTER 35

THE WAYS OF MEN

When the great N.S. and T. railroad line pushed its way through from the East and reached its mighty arm into the undeveloped and unknown West, it intersected the C. and U. C. in the city of Uskern.

The two lines being on friendly terms, in fact it was rumored that the same great head directed both, a big union depot, the pride and boast of the countryside, was erected. Nor was that all; great machine shops, mysterious roundhouses, and magnificent office buildings made their appearance; and Uskern was no longer the country village of other years, but a metropolis the headquarters of the western division.

Country ways and country manners fell away and city noise and culture took their place. Keen minds which had long lain dormant under the quiet monotony of the peaceful village awoke to the situation, and fortunes were made rapidly.

It may be said that in their making and the superficial boom which accompanied them, fortunes were also lost, but that fact was not spoken of in Uskern. That city chose rather to point to those that had been made as an inducement of others to venture, and to forget, seemingly, the other, darker side.

Among those whose fortunes had outgrown the needs of their possessors and must of necessity reach out for other lines of activity and investment, old John Albee, president of the Albee Bank of Uskern, found himself in the lead. His fame as a financier spread through the surrounding country and somehow blinded those who should have seen, to the fact that a mortgage once drawn in favor of John Albee was almost invariably followed by a change of ownership. One by one these were gathered in from the men to whom they were of such vital need and added to the already overgrown fortune of the man who did not need them. It was to this man that Marion Burnside had gone in his hour of fancied financial need, and it was at this man’s suggestions that he and Squire Parsons had made certain speculative ventures which had proved too disastrous for which cause they wavered on the verge of financial ruin.

Such a condition was not unexpected to John Albee. In fact, an examination of the papers in his vault would have disclosed inventories of the holdings of both that were almost as complete as could have been furnished by themselves.

Yet so strange is this world and its happenings, that, at the very hour of the fire which threw the long-coveted properties of Marion Burnside into his hands, physicians, stepped back from his bedside and with solemn faces said, “It is over.”

John Albee had not died without a will, and for the want of some place to put the wealth he had been so busy gaining and regaining, it was scattered, and many charitable organizations were enriched by his going. One individual alone was mentioned in the will. A nephew, also named John Albee, forgotten and neglected during life, was made the legatee for all property not otherwise appropriated. That did not mean that the second John Albee would be as rich as the first had been for there was not much which had not been given already. but it did happen that the mortgage papers covering Marion Burnside’s property as well as some others of less importance were among those not already bestowed, and these under the wording of the will passed into the hands of young John Albee.

These were also the subjects of discussion as John Albee, the second, sat in the office of the attorney into whose custody the will and the temporary handling of the estate had fallen. The old attorney was saying: “Now that was a lucky fire for you – a mighty lucky fire. Marion Burnside was trying to remortgage and would have succeeded if that fire had not come. Given a little time he would have paid off the mortgage. The insurance, of course, was made out in favor of your uncle. That cuts off his changes to rebuild and remortgage from that source. So Marion Burnside lost. Yes, Sir, the older man laughed, “even a fire can be lucky and that was your lucky fire.”

A shadow passed over the face of the young man.

“Yes, lucky for me,” he said, “but what about the man who lost it?”

The attorney looked at him in surprise.

“Oh, well,” he said, “we’re not supposed to think of the other fellow.”

“No, I suppose not.” Young John Albee’s voice bore a peculiar quality. The other fell to studying his face closely.

It was an intelligent face, he admitted that, and it did not lack shrewdness. Yet it did lack something he was accustomed to seeing in his associates of the world, something which puzzled him and set him groping in his mind for a definition of the thing which eluded him.

"How much is the property worth?" the young man questioned.

"Estimated \$25,000; really much more."

"And what is the amount of the mortgage?"

"Ten thousand."

"In other words an unfortunate fire throws into my hands \$15,000 more than I would otherwise have had.

The attorney nodded.

"And the other man loses that \$15,000 as well as the property which probably represented the work of his lifetime."

"Well, yes, I suppose it amounts to that," the older man admitted.

"It doesn't seem quiet right, does it?"

"Why, man!" the other exclaimed. "It's what the world considers a lucky stroke of business. It is from such things that fortunes are made."

"Yes, I know," the young man replied quietly, "but I somehow can't imagine Christ doing it."

"Oh, religion!" was the mental exclamation of the man of the world.

"Let me tell you, young man," he said aloud, "a man can't take Christ very far into his business life. That's all right for Sunday. I like to go to church myself on Sundays. But during the week it's a good thing to forget. Religion is all right as a theory, but it will never do to apply it."

"When will the transfer of the property take place?" the young man questioned again.

"I have already ordered a foreclosure," the administrator answered. "I know it is what your uncle would have done had he been handling the affair himself. You can, of course, order any changes you like in the managing of your estate."

"No," the other said, "you did right. His property is probably tied up until he can't even rebuild. So it is best not to keep it inactive. I was thinking I would run down to Leesburg and look things over, for the sooner the plant is running again the better. You had best look after the legal part of the work. When all is ready, I will go down and take possession. Whatever other changes we wish to make can be made from there later."

"Good," the older man ejaculated; "I thought for awhile you were going to make a poor successor to old John Albee, but I guess you'll do. I'll have the transfer all made. The insurance money will be deposited in your name tomorrow. When the proper time comes, you take possession. I'll attend to the rest."

"All right, Mr. Sherman." Young John Albee held out his hand. "If I need an attorney down there, I'll send for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Albee," the old attorney responded warmly. "You will find me just as willing to serve you as I always have been to serve your uncle before you. Let me know when you need me."

"Not a bad fellow. Not a bad fellow," he murmured when he was alone. But as young John Albee descended the stair, he did that which old John Albee would never have done, for as he walked he prayed: "Help me, O Lord, to be a worthy steward."

CHAPTER 36

THE WAY OF GOD

The thought of that prayer was also under discussion once more under the great maple overshadowing the rapids of Turkey Creek. They had wandered far along the banks of the creek in search of a suitable spot for the performance of the baptisms to which they all looked forward. Unsatisfied, they had retraced their steps once more to this spot which was at once the most beautiful and the most secluded of any they had considered. Not that they tried to hide their acts from the world, but the quiet hush of the place gave them the feeling that in making their covenant, they were here alone with God. Bill Lakeman already knew that wherever the spot on earth at which he followed the footsteps of Christ into the waters of baptism, it would there after be holy ground to him; and no spot save this which had for years been his favorite retreat could satisfy his mind. Moreover, directly under the peninsula, at the foot of the rapids, the action of the water had gradually washed a hole of the required depth, and here, after their struggles with the rapids above, seemed to rest awhile ere they stole quietly along on their journey to the lake.

“See, boy, that’s the spot we want,” Bill Lakeman had said; “after our struggle with doubt and uncertainty we find rest in Christ. When I see those waters resting there, I’ll always know what it means.”

So the decision had been made, and they stood again on the bed of soft mosses, while over them the great tree spread its shade protectingly. The cooling fragrance of the forest and the happy song of the waters came to them with its message of hope and life. Not anxious to leave the spot he loved, Bill Lakeman seated himself, and Alfred, who no longer needed the assistance of the crutch, followed his example.

“Mr. Lakeman,” he said after a moment’s quiet thought, “I don’t want you to come into the church until I feel that I have taught you at least as much of the gospel as it is possible for me to teach you. There are other things yet: there always will be. Truth is as far-reaching as God himself, since it emanates from him. I don’t expect to teach you all, for I know that as long as life shall last we will be adding to our comprehension, our knowledge of the truth. However, I want you to know that accepting the gospel is more than accepting a theory. The world has always been ready to accept theories. But Christ wants more than that, infinitely more. He wants men and women who are willing to work with him, who are willing to help him accomplish his great work. Christ, we are told in the Bible, was in the beginning with God. In that realm he was rich with riches far beyond the comprehension of this world. He laid down those riches for the good of mankind and became poor for our sakes. Now he is calling men and women into the work with him, and as followers of him, they must be ready and willing to make sacrifices for the good of others. Sacrifice is not easy to make, and I am ashamed to say that many times in the past I have ushered men into the church whom I failed to instruct along this line, fearing they might lack the courage to go on.

“Entering into an army on earth in times of war is no light thing; it means service, long marches, scanty rations, and even the facing of fire of the enemy. So it is in the army of Christ. When we join that army we array ourselves with him, against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And I tell you frankly that no man in his own power can make it. Were it not for the fact that Christ gives us the help we need along the way we would all fall in the battle.

“Now there is an old law laid down in the Bible, and as I have taught you the other laws of God I want to teach you that law also. It is the financial law of God, which, like all other laws of his as contrasting with the laws of man, is just.”

“Let me interrupt you for just one moment,” Bill Lakeman said. “I want to tell you what I consider an injustice. It may be the practice of the church I am going to join, I don’t know. But I don’t like it. You know Mrs. Brown, Cynthia’s mother? Well, you know their situation. Now when they levy their church dues, she is expected to pay just as much as Sophronia, Marion Burnside, or any of the rest. I think it’s a burning shame. The money means so much to them. Now I think those who are able to do so should pay dues for those who are not, I don’t believe it is as it should be.”

“Nor I, either,” Alfred agreed. “Everyone knows that churches cannot be carried on without finances, but any method of church financing should be just and fair in its application. The law of tithing, which is God’s way of financing the church, fulfills that requirement.”

Bill Lakeman glanced quickly at Alfred, opened his mouth to disagree, then subsided and waited for Alfred to continue. The young missionary pulled an ever-ready edition of the Bible from his pocket, and quickly found the passage he wanted.

“It isn’t necessary to read a great number of passages concerning tithing, but I want to call your attention to sufficient to show that it was the ancient biblical practice. Let me read Malachi 3:8,10: ‘Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings... Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’

“In the fourteenth chapter of Genesis we read that Abram paid tithes to the priest Melchizedek. Again in Genesis 28:20-22, Jacob made a covenant with God at Bethel, and his closing words were, ‘And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.’ There is ample evidence in the Old Testament that the law of tithing was taught and the tithes used in the religious festivals and for the support of the Levites and priests. The command of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 14:22 was, ‘Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.’

“When Jesus taught on earth, he accepted the practice of tithing, but condemned the Pharisees who tithed meticulously but ignored other aspects of the good way of life. Luke 11:42 reads, ‘Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.’ “

“That’s all very well,” Bill Lakeman said, “but I’m still waiting for you to show that tithing doesn’t work an injustice on the widow when her sacrifice is compared with that of the rich man.”

“If tithing is taught as one tenth of the income, that is true,” Alfred agreed again. “In our church, we have had some honest differences of opinion concerning tithing, and a vast amount of study and prayer has gone into the

effort to find out God's will in the matter. An understanding of this will has been received through revelations delivered to the church, that the temporalities of the church were to be under the charge and care of the bishopric, men holding the office of bishop under a presiding head acting for the church in the gathering, caring for, and disbursing the contributions gathered from the Saints of moneys and properties under the terms of tithing, surplus, freewill offerings and consecrations. This indicates the quorum of the priesthood which has the responsibility of caring for the temporal affairs of the church."

"Another question, boy. How are we to know that these certain ones are not speculators? All men are not honest, you know. Perhaps I haven't quite conquered my distrust of ministers."

"I know," Alfred smiled in response to the twinkle in the old man's eyes," and it is the right of every man to know that anything he gives will go to the work of the Lord and not into the private coffers of any man. All church organizations are not so particular as our own. Some have accused us of not having confidence in those who have charged of the work because we require an account from them. But we do not regard it so, and an auditor who represents the First Presidency of the church examines the books of the bishop thoroughly each year. A report of all money received and spent is published yearly, so that the church members may know just what is being accomplished."

"Good," Bill Lakeman ejaculated." Now you can go ahead."

"I'm reading further in this revelation," Alfred continued: ' The church has been directed to accede to the rendition of the Bishopric with respect to the temporal law; and until such heed is paid to the word which has been given, and which is in accordance with other revelations given to the church, which had been before given, the church cannot receive and enjoy the blessings which have been looked for when Zion should be fully redeemed.' You see what importance is placed on the temporal law by our Heavenly Father, and you noticed in this reading that the church was to accept the teaching of the Bishop with respect to the temporal law as it was in harmony with previous revelations given the church. In recent years, this teaching has been condensed in a conference resolution in which it is stated that the bishops believe it to be the duty of every church member to acknowledge his stewardship by complying with the financial law. As we understand it, the financial law consists of five parts:

1. Filing an inventory which sets forth the assets and liabilities of the member, and determines the amount of tithing which is owed;
2. Paying the tithing which is one tenth of the net worth shown on the inventory or 'first financial statement' as we call it;
3. Paying surplus;
4. making freewill offerings;
5. And thereafter giving an account of one's stewardship of material things and paying one tenth of his increase annually to assist in the work of God."

"Now, wait a minute, young man," Bill Lakeman exclaimed; "you're going too fast for me. Let's take them one at a time. That first one about filing an inventory- what kind of an affair is that? Just where does it go?"

"It is a simple statement of what you are worth financially," Alfred answered. "On it you list at fair value what your possessions are worth. From that is deducted your debts, and the balance is your net worth. One tenth of your net worth is the tithing which you owe to God when you make this first accounting of your stewardship. It is assumed that thus far in life you have received your necessary living expenses, and this net worth represents increase to you. It does not include money that has been spent in the past for luxuries or things above ones needs and just wants, but it does give us a place of beginning. The statement goes to the Bishop, and the information is confidential between him and you. However, it is not just for the purpose of giving the Bishop information which he needs in planning for the building of Zion; it is important in the life of the individual, because by this act, we acknowledge our trusteeship to God for the material blessings which have come into our hands."

"Trusteeship for material blessings," Bill Lakeman mused. "I like that. Yes, I like that thought very much indeed. What a new world we would have if every man accepted his possessions as a trusteeship from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And as for letting the Bishop know about my financial affairs, well, that doesn't bother me. I have to give that information to others and not on a voluntary basis, at that. Now, about surplus? I read in the New Testament about folks who sold their property and gave it to the apostles. That has never sounded reasonable to me."

"We believe in individuals paying surplus to the church," Alfred answered, "but certainly would not advocate anyone's selling all he had and giving it to the church. Suppose, Mr. Lakeman, you should sell all you have and give it to the church, you would then be poor and in need of aid. Any man who did that would lack, would place himself among the poor. This passage that you refer to is one of the most misunderstood passages in the whole Bible. It is

found in Acts, chapters 4 and 5, Listen carefully: 'Neither was there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.... But a certain man names Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'

"Let us note several things in that passage. First, these people had not impoverished themselves, by giving money to the church for the aid of the poor, for the record clearly states, 'Neither was there any among them that lacked'; second, we are not told that Ananias sold all his possessions, but 'a possession'; third, Ananias was not compelled to give by any law of God. The sale of the property and the giving of the money to the church was entirely voluntary. His sin lay in his trying to appear to be what he was not. In the instance, so briefly recorded here, we believe that it was surplus properties- that which was over and above their needs. Otherwise, there would have rapidly been brought about a condition in which many of them would have 'lacked,' and been without means of support."

"Humph," Bill Lakeman said. "Do you think any man today would give property he had, even if it was more than he needed, for someone else who didn't have?"

"Yes," Alfred said, "I think he would if he were a follower of Christ, for he has said: 'If thou lovest me, thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. And behold thou wilt remember the poor and consecrate of thy properties for their support.' You see, Mr. Lakeman, the Lord's plan is not to take from the widows such as you have mentioned, but to give to them. His plan is not to take from a man that which he needs, but rather that which he does not need. And he asks man to give cheerfully that he who needs may have."

"That is a fine theory, boy," Bill Lakeman said, "but it seems to me that the Lord would get awfully little at that. Not that there is not enough in the world, but the man who holds so much that he does not need is little likely to accept Christ. The poor do that."

"Yes, I know," Alfred said. "But even at that the plan works out well. It was not the extremely rich who accepted the gospel in Christ's day, yet they were able to bring about a condition where none of them lacked. We can do the same in our day, Mr. Lakeman. It will take co-operative and unselfish endeavor to bring about greater justice and equality in economic affairs, but the financial law is designed to assist toward that great goal. Now let us go on and consider briefly the other parts of the financial law. The giving of freewill offerings is another part of that law. Tithing is sent to the Presiding Bishop of the church and is used for carrying on the missionary, administrative, and educational work of the church. The needs of local churches must still be met by freewill offerings.. The offering which we know as the oblation is used for assisting the poor and needy. There are always projects toward which offerings can be donated if a person wishes to give. Anyone who is really converted to the church enjoys giving offerings to assist in its work. Then, annually, we should make an accounting of our stewardship of material things for the year. A simple form has been provided also for this purpose. On it, one shows his income for the year, and deducts from that his necessary living expenses. This is the place where our sense of stewardship much be exercised, for all of us can spend everything we make in a year. The difference between the income and one's expenditures for needs and just wants is the annual increase, and one tenth of this amount is due as tithing."

"One tenth of annual increase? Why, boy, that doesn't seem like very much."

"No, it may not appear to be a great deal," Alfred answered, "but if only every church member would keep the law of tithing as I have explained it to you here, the Bishop would not only have the money with which to do the work of the church, but our church membership would grow in spirituality even as the Lord has promised we would. I am sure you have noticed, Mr. Lakeman, that the responsibility of stewardship is placed upon everyone according to his ability but the burden falls not upon the poor, but upon the rich. Are you satisfied that tithing does not work an injustice on the poor?"

"Yes, thoroughly satisfied," replied the old man. "Why, it is an ideal law. That's the thing the whole world wants but doesn't know how to get at it. The world is clamoring for a more equal distribution of wealth."

"Mr. Lakeman, the world wants the whole gospel of Christ if it just knew how to get at it."

"Yes, yes," the old man said. "I can see that now. I can see a purpose and a meaning to all of life that I hadn't known before. Well, it looks as though I have some more work to do. I have to file one of those statements, and pay my tithing. And I'll have to find out if I have any surplus. I was doing some figuring just recently, and this farm with its equipment, livestock, and the feed I have in hand is worth about ten thousand dollars. I have two thousand dollars in the barn, and I'm very fortunate in that the farm is clear of all indebtedness, and I don't own anyone a dollar. That would mean my net worth was approximately \$12, 000.00 as tithing. Am I right?"

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Now, that would leave me \$800.00 in the bank. Is that surplus? I have all the stock and equipment that I need for this place. My crops will be in soon, and will more than care for my winter’s needs. It looks to me as though that \$800.00 should go to the Bishop as surplus.”

The statement was made with such childlike simplicity, that Alfred felt his heart burn with love for the old man whose years in passing had left his character untarnished.

“No, I wouldn’t think so,” Alfred replied. “That is a matter to be worked out between you and the Bishop. I am inclined to think that he will tell you to keep that as a reserve against contingencies that might arise. After all, Mr. Lakeman, you are not as young as you once were, and you must be thinking of the years when your work must slacken and your income decrease. The church has attempted to define surplus, and we believe that surplus exists when a person has accumulated money or property more than he has need, even for reasonable security. In order to determine if a member has a surplus he would discuss the whole matter with the Bishop and take into consideration his age, dependents, business, and other relevant factors.”

“Well, that sounds reasonable and just,” the old man said. “Now, let me see if I get this annual accounting correct. If I figure up at the end of a year, that I’d made \$200.00 above my needs and just wants, I’d owe \$20.00 tithing. Is that the way it goes?”

“Yes, that is the law of tithing as we teach and practice it.”

“Do you know, boy, it’s a source of pleasure to me to know that there is something I can do for the Lord. I’ll tell you, lad, I’m going to make this old farm produce, and then even if I can’t go out and tell others of the gospel, I can help someone else to go, and maybe the Lord will count it a little to my credit.”

“Mr. Lakeman,” Alfred said earnestly, “it will make us all ‘workers together with God.’ That’s the highest position any man on earth can occupy.”

Bill Lakeman acted upon his word. That evening his financial statement accompanied by a check for the entire amount of tithing due, and a characteristic letter was mailed to the Bishop. It found that good man checking over the many calls for help which came to him, while his associates worked over the lists of the missionary’s families and considered their needs.

“How would you like it, brother,” the associate looked up from his work to inquire, “if the time came when there was enough in the storehouse to supply all the worthy poor who came before you for help? How would you like it?”

“God hasten the day,” the Bishop prayed fervently, then sighed deeply. “It is today as it was in the days of old, not many rich give heed unto the world, but unto the poor among men is the gospel preached. yet more could be accomplished. The widow and the orphans need not suffer if those who have named the name of Christ would keep his law.”

Bill Lakeman was not alone in his act, for Stanley made a careful inventory of his rather modest possessions. He was somewhat embarrassed to find that he did not have sufficient cash to pay the amount of tithing which his statement indicated. He talked to Alfred about it, and suggested that he might keep his statement and send it in later when he had sufficient to pay the full amount due. Alfred persuaded him not to do this, assuring him that he should not hesitate to file his statement because this was something he could do now, and the way would open up for him to comply with the financial law fully as time went on.

Jennie Burnside and Henry Parsons made their inventories also, and like Stanley, found that they could make only an initial payment on the tithing which their statements showed as being due from them. To both of them, the making of their accounting was a challenging experience, and brought to them a conviction of the spiritual significance of the economic aspects of their lives. Cynthia would have enclosed a small amount of money with her statement but Alfred restrained her.

“Not now,” he said. “This statement signifies your willingness to make God a partner in your daily work, and to consecrate one tenth of your increase to his work on earth. In your present circumstances, nothing more is required. Someday, when conditions permit, you’ll be able to pay this tithing, and I feel sure that will be a happy experience for you as it has been for thousands of other church members. Perhaps in the future, you may be able to give more than we all; who can tell?”

To Bill Lakeman later he said: “ ‘Tis to such as she that should be given. I do not think we should take from her.”

“Right, boy, right,” the old man said.

A letter from Alfred to the Bishop explaining the case to him and suggesting the results to Cynthia and her mother of an enforced idleness of any duration elicited the following response:

“If the Saints could realize the results were all to follow the example of Bill Lakeman and his associates, I am sure our need could be supplied. We are happy to note that as a missionary, you believe in teaching the ‘fullness of

the gospel.' and we are confident that the gospel shall bring added growth and happiness to these good people because they have been converted to the financial law.

"I am sending a small check for the young sister who is out of employment, and will send a like amount monthly until such time as employment can be had. Keep me advised, for it is possible that should occasion demand, we may be able to help in finding employment else where if it cannot be secured there. It will be our pleasure to assist as far as possible.

"Now in regard to the young man who contemplates entering school this winter. I have taken the matter up with the young people's organization and find that they have a scholarship loan for Graceland College which can be placed at his disposal, and this will take care of his tuition. This can be returned when he has completed his courses and started to work, thus making it possible for someone else to attend college. I would suggest that he write the college business manager to complete his financial arrangements, and to apply for an industrial assignment to assist with his expenses."

The evening came when they gathered around the spot chosen for the baptismal services. A holy hush was on them and each felt the sacredness of the hour. Jennie and Cynthia stood by the water's edge and sang with mellowed voices:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure-
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Alfred, whose eyes were blinded with tears of gratitude, led Bill Lakeman into the waters.

"Mr. Lakeman" – his hand rose high above the old man's snow-white hair, and his voice thrilled with the gladness he could not express, "having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The waters closed for a moment, as the grave over the man: then, as the grave is opened at the last day through the triumph of Christ, they parted again, and Bill Lakeman stood before them a new man in Christ, having been born into his kingdom. As a benediction the words reached them:

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill the law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone-
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Stanley came next. The wish of his heart had been granted, the question settled, and he knew there was a God.

John Bennett followed, and Alfred shuddered when he realized how nearly this man had gone into eternity with his load of sin, which would now be removed and remembered against him no more.

His wife, Mary, followed at her own request, and the eyes she raised to heaven so overflowed with thanksgiving that the voices of the singers broke in sympathy.

Henry Parsons also entered gladly, fear of himself being swallowed up in his newly found confidence in Christ.

Cynthia's mother, who had accepted the message as repeated by Cynthia, Hazel Langdon, Aunt Sophronia, and Cynthia were inducted in their turn into the kingdom of God. Although Aunt Sophronia had not expressed herself as intending to be baptized, yet Bill Lakeman had seen that her own dry clothing had been arranged with that of the others and knew they were not to be a divided family.

Jennie came last, and Alfred felt that his cup of joy was full when he opened the door to her and bade her in Christ's name to enter. And Jennie no longer cared that the way was obscure or humble, but gladly did she find her feet planted in the old, old path made bright though the ages. She felt herself to be one to whom the prophet had spoken:

"Stand ye in the ways, and seek and ask for the old path wherein is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Truly she had found rest. It seemed now that the doubt, uncertainty, and distress of the past never could have existed.

“Oh, Mother, “ she whispered, when she stood again on the sand at the brink of the waters, “if you only could have been here. But I know you know, Mother. I know that where you are you will learn the way, and Christ will give you peace.”

As soon as they were dressed, the chairs were arranged for the last time under the honeysuckle, not around the table as they had been for their study, but in a row, where side by side they should receive that long-forgotten ordinance of the gospel, “the laying on of hands.”

Alfred, as a servant of Christ, passed from one to the other imploring God to confirm unto them the work by the power of his Spirit. From the time his hands were placed on the white hair of Bill Lakeman until they rested on the coal-black tresses of Jennie Burnside at the other end of the row, the Spirit of the Lord rested on him, and they were made to realize the meaning of the words: “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” For the Lord used him to deliver to them messages of encouragement and consolation. To Stanley Lakeman he said:

“The Spirit of the Lord admonishes me to say unto you, his servant, that inasmuch as you have covenanted this day to serve him, he has claimed you as his own, and you shall serve him in harmony with your desires that others might be saved. For there are indeed many yet in this place who will obey, and you shall be as a shepherd over the flock; you shall lead them and teach them of his ways until your journey shall have ended and you shall rest in the paradise of God.”

To Henry Parsons he said: “The time will come when you shall lift your voice in the assembly halls of men to the glory of your God and your Christ.”

And to John Bennett he spoke, mentioning the struggle he had made and giving him the promise of success through the help of God: “For the time will come when you shall be called into active service, and your voice shall be heard in defense of the gospel by many people, even in distant lands.”

So they learned that the God of the past still reigned and that he did truly pour out his Spirit in the last days.

CHAPTER 37

THE GOSPEL INFLUENCE AT WORK

The years which followed were years of wonderful change in Leesburg. John Albee’s coming had not been in vain. He had discovered Alfred as he alighted from the train that first day of his arrival in Leesburg, and their surprise and delight had been mutual.

“Have you been preaching here?” he asked eagerly. “Do tell me that I am not to be isolated. Tell me I shall find Saints.”

“You shall,” Alfred said, laughing at his eagerness. “Nine were baptized yesterday.”

“Good!” the young man exclaimed. “Do you know, Al, I have a fight on my hands. I wonder if in the end I will be any less a child of God.”

“I think you will not,” Alfred answered, “but suppose you tell me about it.”

Then John Albee told him of his changed condition.

“Above all things,” he said, “I want to do as the Lord would have me do. While I am not a rich man, yet I know that the coming of this property means responsibility to God. I realize that I can use it to his glory or to my own spiritual destruction. I pray God it may not be the latter.”

In the end he went cheerfully into the presence of Marion Burnside. He found him crumpled in his chair, the picture of dejection.

“I have been expecting you,” Marion Burnside said. “It’s all ready for you.”

“I looked over the ruins as I came up,” John Albee answered. “I think we should rebuild at once.”

“I supposed you would want to rebuild,” Marion Burnside said. “It is the best thing to do. There were orders enough ahead to keep the plant running for months. The business was well established.”

“Good!” the young man exclaimed. “That will make it easier. Now, Mr. Burnside, when shall we make our plans for rebuilding?”

“We!” Marion Burnside repeated blankly. “Why, man, I haven’t anything to do with it. That property is yours.”

“Mr. Burnside,” the young man returned, “If that fire had not come just when it did, you would never have let the mortgage take that property. You would have found some way to redeem it.”

“Yes, I would,” Marion Burnside said. “But the fire did come, so I guess that ends it.”

"No, it does not end it," young Albee went on. "I have thought this all out and figured it from every angle. Under the law of the land, I own it. But I am living also under another law which tells me I should not take advantage of my neighbor. I figure that I own two thirds of that company and you own the other third. Are you willing to form a company with me?"

Marion Burnside looked at the young man unbelievably, yet said not a word. It was a vision of life as he had never seen it before- one wherein the good of others was consulted and where self did not predominate. He rubbed his eyes as though he dreamed and would drive away the phantom which held them.

"It would be a gift," he said at last.

"No, Mr. Burnside," the other answered, "It is not a gift. I merely refuse to take advantage of your misfortune. You will notice that I retain for myself the majority of the stock. Frankly speaking, I want to control this company's policy. But on the other hand one third is yours if you want it, because I believe it rightly belongs to you. Now if you think we could work together for the rebuilding of the factory, let's get busy and plan how."

Thus John Albee lifted a crushed and broken Marion Burnside that a new and better Marion Burnside might emerge from the ruins of the old.

So they rebuilt and Marion Burnside threw himself into the work with all his usual vim and ardor. For a time he could not become accustomed to the new order of things- the new order in which the good of all was considered, and self rose no higher than was absolutely necessary for the safe conducting of the business. Marion Burnside's ability was also a valuable asset to John Albee, and as time went on and they settled in their ways, he had occasion many times to be thankful that he had not allowed greed or selfishness to rule.

The new, modern factory building which had been erected, so unlike the old, was designed to bring comfort and protection to those employed. A higher scale of wages sent into effect, and satisfaction followed in the footsteps of complaint.

"That certainly is surplus property to me," John Albee laughed, as he and Alfred looked over the big house after Jennie and her father were safely settled in their new home. "I can't live in a house that big."

So the time came when many children played about its grounds, and orphans were comforted within its walls. Mary Bennett found room for them all in her heart, for the church had placed these in her charge, and from the poverty stricken cottage among the trees she had come forth to take up her life work, and Mary Bennett was happy. As time went on and John Bennett entered more and more fully into the work of the newly organized church, Mary Bennett realized that she would soon be called upon to sacrifice his companionship which had grown dearer with each passing day. Yet she knew that a full consecration of her life and his would be a small return for what the Lord had done for them. So she looked forward and prayed for the time when he should become a message bearer. And a true, earnest message bearer he became. The dissipation of the past fell away, and erect in the strength of his manhood he fought the battle of the Prince of Peace. He left his loom that he might help others weave the robe of righteousness which they should wear at the last day.

As for Stanley, he became pastor and shepherd of the church in Leesburg. His task was not always easy, for many problems arose which tested his patience and ability. His work as a physician kept him very busy. Faith, added to his knowledge, had brought him much success, and the demands for his service were almost greater than he could fill.

He had a valuable helper and ally in Henry Parsons, for Henry and his wife had mastered their course and entered into their work energetically. The time came when the plates on the office door read: "Lakeman, Parsons and Parsons: M. D. and O.E. Physicians."

Yet changes came, for the time was when Henry Parsons was sent to the legislature to fill the seat so long occupied by his father. And he lifted up his voice fearlessly in the assembly halls of men for righting of existing wrongs.

Hazel Langdon made an ideal pastor's wife, and Stanley many times received counsel and consolation from her in his hours of discouragement.

"I didn't think, Stanley," Hazel said the day they were married, "when I promised to marry you, that I ever would be the wife of a minister."

And Stanley laughed reflectively as his mind went back to that time when he hated preachers so fervently.

Alfred Stewart did not get home often, for there never came a time in his life when he laid aside the banner. When he did come, however, he always found Jennie waiting for him with words of cheer. Sam Turner with willing toil cultivated the little farm Jennie had purchased and was happy in the thought that it was service for Christ.

When Marion Burnside finally passed, Jennie took up conscientiously her duties as a stewardess under God, and studied carefully the law, "that I fail not," she said.

Bill Lakeman lived to achieve that triumph of all triumphs for, although the time came when, with common grief they gathered round his bed(he would have them all, those he loved so dearly) and saw him fall into his last quiet

sleep, yet Bill Lakeman did not die. By his influence he lived through the generations which followed. For Stanley and the others whose characters, he had helped to mold passed that influence on to their children, from whom it reached out to others in a never-ending wave of helpfulness.