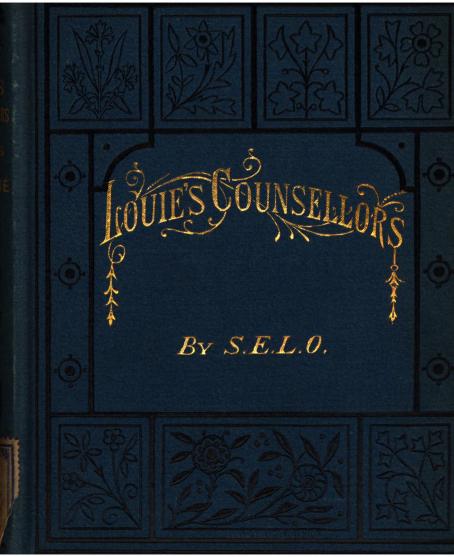
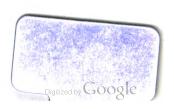
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OR,

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

3 Crue Story.

BY S. E. L. O.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.					PAG
I.	THE RISING OF THE CLOU	D		•••	 9
П.	EVERYDAY LIFE				 16
III.	THE CLOUD DARKENS			•••	 22
IV.	THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE	Road			 28
V.	LOUIE'S SHELTER				 37
VI.	How the Shelter was U	PSET			 45
VII.	A SAD MESSAGE				 54
VIII.	SHADY PLACES				 65
IX.	NEW Scenes				 75
X.	THINGS THAT WOULD NOT	Do			 86
XI.	THE DOOR OF HOPE	•••			 100
XII.	SHINING WITHOUT SHADON	₹			 106





"I know the thoughts that I
think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace,
and not of evil to give you an expected end."

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."



A hidden chain, a mighty chain, Was cast around the child; And though earth's hopes and fears again, And yet again beguiled Her heart; the chain's resistless power Drew closer round her, hour by hour: It bound her thoughts, then to unfold His thoughts, whose thoughts are peace; Her eyes, that so she might behold The One who gives release; It bound her heart, for it was love, Love, endless, holy, strong, Stronger than death, and captive thus, The child was borne along. To tell the wondrous joy and gain Of such captivity, Fruit of the Saviour's cross and pain, Will need eternity.





LOUIE'S COUNSELLORS;

OR,

Clonds and Sunshine.

CHAPTER I.

THE RISING OF THE CLOUD.



was Saturday evening; Louie and the other children were at play in the dining-room at Marine Villa; it was a pleasant room, with a long French window that opened on to a verandah, and beyond that there was a nice slope of lawn before you reached the hedge that shut the garden off from the high road.

Many happy hours the children spent in the garden, but now it was evening, and on Saturday evenings, except in very bright summer weather, they played in the dining-room; every other evening of the week they spent in the drawing-room, but on Saturday evenings they always played together. Louie's evenings at present were not very long ones, for she was almost the youngest of the party, but she managed to get a good deal of play out of a short time, for she was a merry little girl, and I don't think, until this Saturday evening, she had ever felt a care or even a sorrow which had lasted a whole hour, though she had heard of sorrow, even in her short life, as who in this world has not? But seeing others in sorrow is a very different thing from being in it one's self, and hearing of care and trouble is very different from being actually yourself under its cold dark shadow.

But what shadow could find its way into that pleasant room, and, all uninvited, cast its chill over Louie's light childish heart?

In the midst of the play, the dining-room door was gently opened, and the children saw their nurse standing there; something in the look of her face hushed them at once, and they gathered round her with wondering expectation. She answered the looks: "Yes; something very sad has happened; poor Hunt's

little grandchild is dead, just dead a few minutes ago; Hunt has been down and told us."

Hunt was the gardener. Besides the lawn and flower borders in front of the house, there was a long garden which sloped up a steep hill behind the house; the nursery window looked out upon this garden, and from that window the tall old man could be constantly seen at his work; at the very top of the garden was the little house where Hunt lived, and where, as long as Louie could remember, his grandchild had lived, but where now that little child had just died.

I don't know whether the children had known this little child, or whether they ever went into the house which stood at the top of the steep garden, but they were very grave when nurse had told her news and they did not feel inclined for any more play; so they all went up to the drawing-room, and there was only time for a little more quiet talk about Hunt and his grandchild before they were sent for, one by one, to go to bed.

Louie went very gravely away when her turn came, and all the time she was preparing for bed her mind was very busy with a crowd of new and unexpected thoughts which had come into it; the blind was drawn over the nursery window, but still Louie could not help looking at it a great deal, and could not help, though it was just what she did not wish to do, thinking how very little distance there was between her nursery and the room where the little child had died scarcely an hour before. She was glad when, at last, she was quietly laid down in bed, for she wanted to think about, and to try and answer the questions which her mind kept asking, over and over again. What had become of Hunt's little grandchild? Could no one have kept that little child from dying? Supposing it were Louie herself who died! What would become of her? Could no one keep her from dying? Was Death there, so near to her? Might she, like the gardener's little child, die at any moment? and thenoh! what would become of her? All these questions went round and round in Louie's poor little mind, and her mind knew not what to answer; her heart was full of fear and sorrow, and that heart could find nothing in itself to give comfort, so its poor little owner turned about in her bed, and thought, and questioned, and thought again; the only thing that came at last, as a kind of answer, to her mind was a dim remembrance of some lines she had heard about

"the cold dark grave." This was no comfort, so at last Louie tried to think of all the care and love that was around her in her home, and to feel a hope that all that care would keep her from dying, and so, with this little hope, she got more restful and fell asleep.

Oh! how different was Louie's comfort and Louie's rest from that of another little girl I have heard of: she had a sorrowful question in her heart one night, and she tossed restlessly in bed, as Louie had done, and with something of the same fears, but she did not fall asleep, as Louie did, with a wretched little bit of comfort gathered from her own poor heart. This little girl did not keep all her thoughts to herself and answer them again with other thoughts, still her own; no, she sat up in bed, at last, when her heart was so full of fear and sorrow that she could hold it no more, and she told out all that was in her heart to the Lord Jesus; all the fear and all the sorrow; and she got a sweet answer of peace from Him, for He was looking down all the time in tender pity and love. That same Jesus was looking down at Louie too, and would have answered all her questions, and would have given her a sweet answer of peace; He would have let her go to sleep with a rest of His own giving, and that

could never be lost, if only she had told Him all that was in her heart. It is a sad thing to try and answer for ourselves the questions that arise in our hearts, or to try and find comfort for ourselves for the sorrow that assail those hearts: it is a blessed thing to tell out all the questions and all the sorrows to God, for "God is love."

Perhaps you are ready to ask why God, who is love, allowed poor little Louie's heart to be shadowed with so dark a cloud that night; why He allowed such a little child to feel so much trouble and to be kept awake with so many strange sad questions.

Ah, it was all love!

How many children lie down, night after night, in snug beds and there, after a few minutes, fall asleep; and a few hours later, when they are fast asleep, how often a dear mother comes into the room where the little ones are, to take a "good night" look at them: she treads softly, and shades the light with her hand that she may not disturb them, and it is love that makes her thus careful. But supposing the house where the little sleepers lay was on fire, and that thus they, though all unconscious of danger, were every moment drawing nearer a terrible death! Ah! then

the same love which before was so careful not to disturb them would hasten to rouse them; the parents would run into the room, they would call aloud to the children, they would shake them, anything rather than leave them to sleep on in danger. The children might cry at the sudden disturbance or, half asleep, might wish to lie down again, but love would not allow this, it would arouse them again and again, and would not suffer them to rest until it had brought them to a place of safety.

So Louie, though she seemed a light-hearted child, was in danger, as every child is who is contented with its own little hopes and joys, and whose heart has never felt its need, and never sought and found the Saviour Jesus. But Love would not leave Louey to sleep in the place of danger, and so it had begun, that night, to arouse her.





CHAPTER II.

EVERY-DAY LIFE.



HE next morning, Louie's mind was much quieter; each new day presented so many new things to be seen, and done, and heard, that Louie almost forgot the cloud which on Saturday night had cast such a cold, dark shadow over her heart. She almost forgot, but not quite; Love, that had sent the

shadow, would not allow her quite to forget it; still, before the end of the week it had grown to be a very dim remembrance, for a week seemed then a very long time to Louie, and each of its days brought a good deal of business even to her. For besides looking out from the nursery window and watching the gardener at his work, Louie had her own to do; it was not very hard

work, but, as she was a very little girl, it needed all her attention to get through it happily.

Louie's first business was to repeat a verse of scripture every morning, and with the verse she had to say the day of the week, the day of the month, and the date of the year; then she had to read a few verses of the Psalms out of a great book with a red leather cover. This was such a large book that, when the verse she was reading happened to be at the top of the page, it was quite a stretch for her little arm to reach it, so that her finger might point the way along the line and thus do its best to prevent her eyes from losing their way among the forest of words that filled the large, square page. The finger was a very patient little servant to the eyes, and would have guided them willingly and safely, line by line, all down the page; but the eyes, I am sorry to say, did not always make the grateful return which would have been becoming on their part. Sometimes the finger and the lips toowere kept waiting while those eyes took a journey all round the room, or even a peep into the garden, but as these journeys were only accidental, and not Louie's intention, she generally recalled the eyes before they had been gone very long, and so the reading was gotthrough. Then the hands and eyes did service again, in filling her slate with o's or little words; it needed very close looking to make every letter stand in its place along the line, and to join every o so neatly that the place where it ended could not be seen. If the hand tried to get on without the eves, the result was soon seen in an o looking like a piece of bent wire, or like something which had been broken and tied together again with an untidy bit of string; not at all like the neat and beautifully rounded letters which were put as copies at the top of the slate. But sometimes Louie forgot all this, and would let her eyes wander out through the long window, down the lawn, over the hedge, the road, the fields on the other side, even across the wide river, to the blue hills which could be seen in the distance.

Those blue hills were so wonderful to Louie! all the hills near Marine Villa were green; and sometimes, when Louie was quite tired of getting through the slate full of o's, she would wait quite a long time thinking about the blue hills, and wondering if anybody lived in so lovely a place, and wishing that she had wings like a little bird, so that she might just fly over and see the wonderful people who lived among

those wonderful hills, and find out something about the wonderful things they must do there.

Plenty of people had been and still went, every day, though not on wings but in steamboats, to those blue hills which were the hills of Wales, and which, though Louie did not know it, were just as green as the hills on her side of the water; and where, if she could have gone over to look, she would have found other little girls, very like herself, sitting up, just as she was, in the midst of slates and books, learning to read and write. Generally Louie's dreams were cut short by Mamma or Auntie reminding her of her business; and so, with perhaps a little tiny sum, scarcely longer than her own little finger, Louie's work was finished and she could go up to the nursery to be dressed for her walk, and to wait till everybody else was ready to go out.

The nursery was a long room: there was not much furniture standing in it because so much live furniture belonged there, but at one end was a large wardrobe; beside the wardrobe, between it and the door, there was a long ottoman, and near the window was nurse's worktable and chair. There were, no doubt, a few more chairs and other things, but the most important part

of the nursery, in the children's eyes, was the stable where lived some very curious animals—an elephant, a camel, and a buffalo; opposite the wardrobe was the fire-place, and a large Indian rug, laid down before the high fender, was all the carpeting of which the nursery could boast. Mamma had her own reasons for thinking that the nursery boards were better without carpet. but the children highly approved of the plan, for the bare boards looked so much more like the sandy desert which the patient camel was intended to traverse, and the wheels, on which the elephant and buffalo moved because they could not move their legs, made a much more business-like rattle on the boards than they could have done on any carpet; so, from the noise made, you might have almost supposed that the rest of mankind were taking holiday while all their business was carried on by those three strange animals and their drivers.

But the children were often called from these nursery expeditions to others through the village or into the wood, for not far from Marine Villa there was a most pleasant wood; there were broad green walks through the midst of this wood, and at all times abundance of whatever flowers, fruits or berries the season afforded. The children often filled their baskets with violets or wood anemones, sometimes, a few ripe wild strawberries, but these were never enough to fill the baskets, and a dozen would have been thought a great deal of; blackberries, when their turn came, made a much greater show, but they were to be found by the roadside or in field hedges more often than in the wood. At the river's edge, a few shells could be picked up, none of a very choice kind, but they pleased the children, and so the walks in and round the quiet village always presented variety enough to charm a simple little girl like Louie.





CHAPTER III. THE CLOUD DARKENS.



of the weeks and months passed by, and it was now quite a long time since that first night when the shadow, a very real shadow, for it was "the shadow of death," had fallen upon Louie's heart; it was Saturday again, but Saturday morning, and when all in the house were gathered together in the

dining-room for morning reading, some very solemn words fell upon her ears and entered into her heart.

These words were part of the twenty-second verse of the fifth chapter of Matthew; they were such very plain words that even Louie was able to understand something of their meaning, and all through the day they kept returning again and again to her mind. The words were only five, but they were quite enough to

fill Louie's mind; yes, and enough to fill many a greater and wiser mind than hers. No wisdom of man could ever find an answer to those words, but there is a blessed answer to them, an answer so simple that even the simple mind of a child can take it in, and yet an answer so great that it can drive away all the terrible thoughts brought by those five solemn and dreadful words—"In danger of the judgment." The answer is this—" Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."

What sweet peace might have filled Louie's heart, instead of fears, if she had heard and had received by faith that blessed answer! The heart that trusts in Jesus need feel no fear, even at the thought of judgment, for Jesus has said, "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." Louie had, I dare say, often heard these words; perhaps, among the morning verses, she had even learnt them, but her heart had never taken them in, and it is "with the heart" man believes unto righteousness.

Louie did not think all day long about the five words, still they were fastened securely in her mind, and several times, in the midst of her lessons or her play, she was obliged to stop and listen while they were repeated, as if by a voice within her. Perhaps you think that with such a grave thought Louie would be very good that day, but it is love that constrains the heart to do what is pleasing to God; fear cannot bring forth in us any of those good fruits which faith and love produce. Fear may bring bondage. or sometimes God in mercy uses our fear to make us cry out, as the Philippian jailor did in the earthquake long ago, "What must I do to be saved?" But Louie did not cry out, she only took counsel with her own heart, and that heart which, like every other heart, was "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," could not lead her in the way of peace. So it happened, that very evening, that notwithstanding all the grave thoughts and all the fears, Louie, in a fit of heedlessness, did something which she knew to be wrong; then, a great number of other wrong and foolish things which she had said and done rushed into her mind and, with them, the remembrance of that Saturday night when first she had learned that she was a dying creature; and along with all this came another thought which Louie could not refuse,

for it was from the word of God: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

How true this seemed! How real to Louie now! Not merely some words from a book, however sacred and true, but a fact, and a fact about herself: Louie felt that it was she herself who was "in danger of the judgment;" she felt as if, at that moment, she were the only person upon the earth; a lonely, guilty, terrified child, forced to go, notwithstanding herself, on a swift, uninterrupted journey to death, "and after death the judgment." What sad and terrible feelings! Louie was making a mistake, a mistake which many make, the mistake of taking her own heart as her counsellor instead of pouring out the thoughts and fears of that heart to God, and learning His thoughts. The thoughts that God thought towards this poor little child were thoughts of peace and not of evil, but Louie did not wait to learn those precious thoughts then.

If, instead of only turning over the contents of her own dark heart, Louie had turned over the leaves of her Bible, she would have found out another mistake which she was making: it is quite true that it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment, and those who pass away from earth without Christ, and consequently without eternal life, will have to taste the dreadful realities of death and judgment; but, if Louie had looked into her Bible, she would have found out that she was beginning at the second instead of at the first word of the sentence which had come to her mind; now, this first word makes all the difference to that solemn sentence, though it is a very little word—As—"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Now Louie's verse will not make sense by itself, no, and it is not intended to be read by itself; you must go on, and then you will get a blessed message for your heart to rest on. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

Oh! how different are the thoughts of God, thoughts of mercy, thoughts of grace and love! how different from the thoughts of our hearts! How different was Louie, taught by her own thoughts, her heart burdened with the remembrance of many sins and the just fear of the wrath of God, looking forward to death and

judgment, from what a child who receives the whole of this precious word in Hebrews ix. 27, 28 would be. Instead of the remembrance of sins would be the remembrance of the love of Christ, "who loved me and gave himself for me;" instead of fear would be trust and peace and joy; and instead of looking forward to death and judgment, looking forward to see Him, "even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come."

There was no more play for Louie that evening; even the other children caught the shadow of this cloud and became dull and quiet, and no one was sorry when bed-time came; but how sad it was to lie down under a dark, heavy cloud, when Heaven was bright with God's own light and love, and the way was open for Louie, as she had often read in those words of the Saviour Jesus—"I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved."



CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE ROAD.



ERHAPS you may wonder, after what befel Louie in the last chapter, that there ever could be again a sunny side of the road for her until she got into the place where light is unclouded; but a sunny spot is not the land of sunshine.

If you were going along a lane bordered by high banks and hedges,

one bank might be in the shade, and it would look dull and gloomy, and the half of the road on that side would look dark; perhaps, as you walked along this shady side, you might see something which attracted you to the other side—a pale primrose or bright scarlet strawberry—you might cross the road, and immediately you would be in the warmth and brightness of the unshadowed bank, and in the brighter light you might find many a flower and berry to keep you on the sunny side. But I will tell you what would be going on all the time behind you; the shadows you had left would come creeping, creeping after you, and if you stayed long enough among the flowers you would scarcely notice the darkening of the sunny bank until night had stolen upon you, and left you in darkness, without a ray of sunlight to brighten either side of the road.

So with Louie: she was still in the same road of clouds and shadows, and the shadows were getting longer, as shadows will; but about this time something happened which drew her across to the sunny side of the road, that is, which occupied her with a great many new thoughts that, like the bright flowers and berries on a sunny bank, kept her mind away from clouds and their shadows.

They were all going away to a new home, so a great deal of packing and bustle of all kinds was going on in Marine Villa; in the nursery the great wardrobe had to be emptied of its contents, and the ottoman, in its turn, had to be filled with almost more than it could hold. The camel, elephant and buffalo who, with all their noise, could not be trusted to get through a journey by themselves (for you know it is not always those who make the most noise who get through the most work), had to be packed into a box, which must have been a strange experience for such important animals. At last the great Indian rug had to be rolled up and stowed away; and even from the dining-room those grave piles of slates and books which, morning by morning, had lain immovably in their places, as if to make known that nothing less than the accustomed amount of attention would satisfy them, at last even these dignities had, like the camel and his companions, to be packed away, and so, in due time, all was ready.

Louie had some very special business to attend to before she could be ready; for besides those animals who, though they of course did not expect such treatment, could be packed into a box, Louie possessed a real, live animal which required no wheels, for it could move fast enough upon its own legs, but which, nevertheless, could not perform the journey upon those same legs, and which yet could not be packed away in a box. Still less could Pussy be left behind! for in Louie's eyes there was no Pussy like her: she had

been brought as a present by a kind friend from France: this added to her value. Besides this she was a very pretty creature, being perfectly white; from the tip of her little pinky ears to the very end of her tail. every single hair of Pussy's coat was snowy white; besides her pretty coat Pussy had what was of far more value, an affectionate disposition and plenty of intelligence, and if she had been left behind to a new mistress she would soon have discovered the change, and would have been very unhappy indeed. But, as became so travelled a Pussy, who had already crossed the sea from France to England, she possessed a travelling apartment; this was a high basket having a convenient little door, just large enough for her to step in and out of; and also, in order that she might have plenty of air and might not feel dull, on each side of the basket was a little window.

Pussy, who had not enjoyed the packing-time as the children had, and who, intelligent though she was, could not look at a map to see where she was going, was not so pleased as the children were when the day for starting at last arrived, but, as you know, even cats, in a well-ordered family, cannot have their own way. Pussy, though much against her will, had in due

time to be caught and securely fastened into her travelling apartment; there she might mew piteously, but Louie could not let her out, for she knew that, in the end, it would be much better for Pussy to be kept in the basket (and thus take the journey and find a new home with her old friends) than to be let have the freedom she wished for and then, when too late, find that, through her own ignorance and self-will (which, as she was but a poor pussy, she could not help) she had been left behind.

Even on the sunny bank the children found a few shadows, for, as the time of departure really drew near, it was quite sad work to say "good-bye" to many friends, to take a last walk through the pleasant village and a last run in the wood, and to pick up a few last shells from the river's edge. But it had all to be gone on with until at last the morning came, when not only Pussy but Louie, and all the children as well as the boxes, had to be stowed away wherever Mamma thought best, in and on the carriage, and then they drove away, up the hill and past the wood and down to the river's edge. Then they had to walk along a little rough pier and then, after some difficulties with slippery steps and planks and ladders, which the

grown up people thought very inconvenient, but which the children thought charming, they were all settled upon the deck of a steamboat, or at least as settled as any of them could feel in such new circumstances. For the boat began to tremble while the funnel puffed, and away they went, not across the river to the blue hills, but down the river, which grew wider and wider until, at last, its second bank entirely deserted it and turned it into a channel which, to Louie's eyes, looked as great and as wide as her largest ideas of the Pacific Ocean; however it was not that or any other ocean, and before night, when steamboat and coach had done their part, the children found themselves at their new home. This too was a pleasant house, and had, like Marine Villa, a green slope in front, but the sea was quite close beyond that, only on the other side of the road, and there were no blue hills for Louie to dream about; besides, I think she had grown old enough by this time to find out that the Welsh hills had only looked blue in the distance, and were in reality as green as any other hills, when you were near them.

The children found most of their pleasure outside the house; perhaps one reason for this was that there

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was no nursery as at Marine Villa; instead of this there was a school-room, which was no doubt in every respect a superior apartment, but I doubt whether the children found the same attraction in its carpeted floor and neat, well-filled bookshelves and quiet look-out over a little back garden, as in the sounding boards and convenient space of their former nursery. But though without the nursery, they had plenty of places where they found much enjoyment; beyond the little garden which the schoolroom window overlooked, they had one which was quite their own; on them depended the sowing, the watering, and the weeding of this little bit of ground, and I hope, considering the amount of time which the children spent there, and the energy and attention which they bestowed on the work, that it was a credit to the young gardeners.

The children's gardens opened into a field, and here they might, when tired of the hard work which the six small beds and the little paths required, run and play as much as they liked. I think the camel and buffalo were rather forgotten at this time, for they could not be brought beyond the house, and a new occupation arose which appeared to be more interesting and important, as well as more suited to field play, though

whether quite suited to a little girl like Louie, I can hardly say.

A brother, coming from school for his holidays, had brought with him a pair of stilts, which was so novel a plaything that it threw hoops and balls and such things quite into the shade; Louie was very pleased whenever her turn came to mount the stilts, and, when perched upon them, would remember all she had heard or read about the Landes, those flat plains in the southwest corner of France, which are so very marshy that the shepherds who tend flocks there can only traverse them by means of stilts; Louie could almost fancy herself one of these French shepherds, but generally, before she had taken many steps, her dreams were put an end to by a tumble. I suppose the stilts were low and the grass soft, or perhaps the children took care to hold on with one hand to the garden fence, for though they had many tumbles they never broke any bones; though I do not think that, with all the practising, any of them, except George, who was the rightful owner of the stilts, ever grew expert enough to attempt crossing the field, far less to fulfil any dreams of excursions with sheep across the distant Landes.

Besides the field, there was another very delightful

place not far from the house; this was a great common covered with sandy hillocks, and in which grew nothing but rushes; these hillocks were so conveniently arranged, into circles and semicircles, that it was the easiest thing in the world to turn either of them into a beautiful drawing-room with soft sofas and comfortable armchairs, all made of sand. Thus there was much, as you see, to engage Louie's mind; many new scenes, new duties, and new pleasures, but, in the midst of it all, she yet found that she had the same heart, with its mistakes and its troubles, and the same clouds with their shadows; and this was a very sad discovery.





CHAPTER V.

LOUIE'S SHELTER.



HOUGH there was, as you have seen, so much to keep the children busy in the garden, the field, and the common, to say nothing of all that was seen and done upon the seashore, there was yet another place which expected their presence for several hours every day, and perhaps you will easily guess that

this was the schoolroom. For what would have been the use of that well-arranged apartment, with its large steady table and abundance of chairs, its varnished wall maps, its long reclining board, its bookshelves and rows of books, and Miss R. in her place, if the children had not been found also in their places?

Thanks to the slates and the books, and the patience of kind friends who had daily drawn Louie's attention to them, the time was long past when the finger had to take any part in the reading lesson; indeed Louie's eyes and lips by this time had learnt to go so fast, that the patient little servant of former days would have found it very difficult to keep pace with them, as they safely travelled down page after page. Louie began to find great pleasure in reading, and to think a great deal about what she read; she often read stories of other children, like herself, and whenever the cloud, which had never left her, because there was nothing in her own heart that could chase it away, cast its dark shadow over her, she would think about some of the stories she had read, and would try to remember something in them which might give her help or comfort.

Besides reading about other children, Louie became acquainted, at this time, with two very sweet little girls who lived on the top of a high hill about a mile distant; their names were Ellen and Emma; their home was a very poor little cottage, and it stood in the midst of several other poor cottages. The children were all fond of visiting the people who lived in these cottages, and sometimes, when by self-denial they had

saved a few pence out of their little pocket money, a piece of bright pink or lilac print would be bought at the village shop, and then, after a great many little stitches had been patiently put into it, ending with the more delightful task of running a tape into the neck for a string, the worker would be rewarded by having a pinafore which would be given with much pleasure, and equally well received by some child in the hill cottages. Sometimes a big loaf would be bought instead of a pinafore, and, though it was rather a heavy burden for so long a walk, it was very gladly carried; sometimes, Mamma sent a basket or parcel; sometimes the children had nothing to carry; but they always went with pleasure to the hill. The walk there was agreeable, and plenty of jumping and climbing might be done by the way; and besides this, though I am sure you will think it very strange, I must tell you that Pussy always took care to be of the party when they went up the hill. The sea shore, the high road, or the rush common she did not approve of, but she considered the lane a safe place, and would always conduct her little mistress to the first cottage she visited, and then would contentedly turn round and trot home.

Jane, Mary Ann, and several others were among

those who lived in the cottages on the hill, but Ellen and Emma were Louie's favourites; Ellen's face was thin and pale, but there was a gentle, contented look upon it, and whenever her mother told her to repeat a few Scripture verses or a hymn to the visitors, she was ready, and whatever she said was said so correctly and so thoughtfully that Louie never forgot the sound of the texts and hymns repeated by Ellen's childish voice.

However, something happened which for a time put an end to the visits to the hill: a bad fever broke out among the cottages which were rather crowded together; little Ellen took the fever; the children saved up their pence to send her milk and some of the other little things which are good for sick children; grown up friends did their part; Ellen's mother watched and nursed and wept and prayed, the doctor attended and gave many remedies, but still, the Lord had need of little Ellen, and He took her away.

The children were very sorry when they heard that she was gone, and it was a long time after this before they were able to see little Emma and her mother. Louie thought a great deal about Ellen's death, as once she had thought about the death of the gardener's little grandchild, but her thoughts now were very different; she did not need to ask what had become of Ellen, she knew well now what became of those who died; she knew that only their bodies were laid in the grave; that the soul departed to be with Christ, happy for ever, or else went to that place of distance from God where misery is eternal.

Ellen's mother told how patient and obedient her little girl had been all through her long, suffering illness, how she had spoken of going to be with Jesus. and how happy and peaceful she had been in her last moments. In many things Louie resembled Ellen: she was of about the same age, she too could repeat many hymns and verses of Scripture, and was, like Ellen, always ready to do this when called upon, but still Louie could not feel that she should be at all peaceful or happy if she found herself dying; she remembered the solemn words learned on that Saturday long ago, "once to die, and after this the judgment." What could have made Ellen so happy? What could give peace, even in the prospect of death? Ah! there was an answer to Louie's question in God's own word, if she had but taken it as her counsellor: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ." But again she answered with the thoughts of her own heart, and so again she made some sad mistakes, and gained nothing but sorrow.

Louie knew well enough now that the hope under which she had before sheltered herself from fear of death was vain and useless: she knew that no care of a loving mother, and no attention from clever doctors could drive away death. Ellen's mother had loved and nursed her, yet she had died; the doctor had been kind and attentive to Ellen and had tried many remedies, and yet she had died; but Louie hoped that, before she should be called to die, a long illness would visit her; she hoped that she should lie, day after day, in bed, and that then, in some way, she could not tell how, she should become, by degrees, patient and gentle and good, and that then she should look peaceful as Ellen, and many others of whom she had read, had looked in their last moments. Oh! what a poor, miserable shelter was this! The deceitful thought of a deceitful heart.

Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross: there is no peace but the peace which Christ made. Christ came preaching peace: there is no peace but the peace which Christ preaches. Christ said, "Peace I

leave with you, my peace I give unto you: "there is no peace but the peace which Christ gives. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." These is no peace to those whose sins are not forgiven for His name's sake. There could be no peace to Louie from a long illness or from patient behaviour. And could anyone be patient, peaceful, happy, with a sick, suffering body, and a conscience stung with the remembrance of unforgiven sins? For "the sting of death is sin."

There was once a miserable man who died in unbelief and so with sins unforgiven, without Christ; he had a long illness, but could that give him peace? No, indeed; so terrible was his misery and so awful his end, that the woman who nursed him said she would never again attend upon anybody who was not a Christian.

And could Louie know that she would have a time of illness, in which to prepare herself for death? Oh no! it was a sad mistake. I have known, and perhaps you too have known, many children and many grown up people who have been called away by death, in one moment. A few years ago, two little boys were running home from school; one of them never reached home. On the way was a canal, bordered by a narrow,

green pathway. The little boys ran along this pathway, and the younger slipped in; the other, who was but a small child also, ran home to tell his mother. Many hastened to the spot, they drew out the little child, but it was too late; he was dead. Ten minutes before he had been running, full of life, by the water's edge; but now, he was dead!

Only a few weeks ago, a boy went out to his work in the field; a dark cloud was overhead, but E. never thought what that cloud would bring to him. Some raindrops fell, then a bright flash of lightning shot across the sky—E. fell to the ground, he was struck; the men who were at work with him ran to his help, but it was too late, he was dead.

Louie's shelter was a miserable one, a mistake arising from her own ignorant and foolish heart, and beneath it she might have perished, and perished for ever: it was not "a hiding-place, a covert from the tempest, a place of refuge, a covert from storm and rain:" and Love would not allow her to remain undisturbed in it.





CHAPTER VI. HOW THE SHELTER WAS UPSET.



O Louie was still in a place of danger, notwithstanding the shelter which her own thoughts had erected and with which her heart tried to whisper, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace. She was still like a child in a burning house, and moreover now like a child who, though called by love to escape, shut her eyes to

the glare of flames and stopped her ears from the sound of ruins falling around her, and, retreating behind some frail little screen, desired to be left to slumber instead of continuing to hasten away from the scene of destruction. But Love, patient, pitying Love, even the Love of Him who "fainteth not, neither is weary," would arouse her again.

The days and weeks passed by; winter had set in. and there was less opportunity for play in the field or for work in the garden. Other employments took the place of those which had chiefly engaged the attention of the children during the summer; besides this, each month more work was expected from them in the schoolroom. Louie's fingers had grown a great deal longer than those little fingers that used to point the way in the large, red leather book, but her sums had increased in length still more than her fingers, and now they often stretched all down her slate, for she was just beginning long division, which she thought was very well named, for whether measured by minutes or inches, it seemed to her a very long affair indeed. Then, besides the sums, there were French exercises to be written, and French stories to be read. and quite a pile of books, from each of which she had to repeat a lesson every day; but yet there remained plenty of time for walks and play, and long winter evenings in the drawing-room, which were almost more pleasant than the summer evenings spent in the field or on the sands. The drawing-room had a large bay window looking out upon the sea, and when the tide was high and rough, the sound of the waves could be

plainly heard in the quiet evening hour, when the children were all seated at the large round table with their work.

One evening, when they were each of them thus busy, Grandmamma had laid aside her knitting and was reading aloud. Grandmamma read slowly and distinctly, and always from some simple book that the children could understand; and often the reading was so interesting that Louie could scarcely spare enough of her mind from it to give the attention which her needle required to send it along its hem or seam. So the needle had long holidays, while Louie's eyes were fixed upon Grandmamma, and her thoughts were journeying back, perhaps to the wonderful days when Martin Luther, in the midst of his deep darkness and dreary useless penances, had heard the voice which said to him, like a message from heaven, "The just shall live by faith," and when, like Paul of old, being not disobedient to the heavenly communication, he had risen from his knees, and standing upon his feet had learned to walk by faith. Or, sometimes, with a full heart she followed the wanderings, and watched the conflicts, and shared the hopes and fears of the Vaudois or Waldenses, those few despised ones who yet were

among the number "of whom the world was not worthy," who wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy. Sometimes the scene was nearer home, and the time a less distant one, and Louie's heart was engaged in Ireland, hearing of the terrible sufferings brought there by famine and fever, and how, in the very day of need and languishing, many a poor thirsty one had drunk of the water of life and had found Him who said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

How wonderful all these stories were to Louie! Not only because of the stirring scenes in dark convent, royal court, and stately judgment hall where the brave Luther witnessed his good confession; not only because of the heroic endurance and wondrous escapes of the despised mountaineers, or the depths of almost unparalleled poverty known among the once plentiful hills and fields of Ireland; but because each and all seemed to find, in the Scriptures and in the name of Jesus, a something that made up for all losses, and that satisfied every longing of the heart and every need of

the soul. Louie knew the Scriptures, those same Scriptures, well, and that Name above every name, the precious name of Jesus, how familiar to her ears and lips, and yet she felt no satisfaction, no joy nor sense of a treasure possessed; she felt nothing but fear and the desire of a guilty conscience to put off as long as might be, the day when she must see Him face to face: the same Scriptures, the same precious Name, but what a difference! and where was the difference? Louie hardly knew, and sometimes she almost thought it would have been better for her if, instead of the quiet home and surroundings of peace and plenty, and instruction in wisdom's ways, she had been one of the persecuted wanderers long ago, or one of those dark heathen told of in her Missionary Magazine, who received with such joyful surprise the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent; or one of those in the famine-stricken land who. from their deep poverty, had learned to trust in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Louie knew not as yet half the depth of her own need, nor that her poverty was far greater than that of the famine-stricken children who lay gasping beside the cold fireplace, and the empty cupboard; she knew not that she herself, though seated in that pleasant room and listening to the dear Grandmamma's voice, was poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked; and so her trust and hope was still in self, and such trust could give but a restless dissatisfied feeling, for it is only when we are "justified by faith" that we "have peace with God," and that, not through anything in ourselves, but only "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Fear and peace cannot dwell together in the heart; "fear hath torment," that is not peace; and on this very evening, though the scene seemed one of peace and security, something happened which, in a moment, brought poor Louie into a very torment of fear.

Amid the surging of the waves, as they beat against the strong sea wall, a strange sound was heard; a dull, distant roar, increasing in strength, till it ended in a great heavy boom. Again and again this strange sound was repeated. The reading was stopped, while every one wondered what the noise meant, and in the midst of the talk and the wondering, Louie's bedtime came, and she left the drawing-room. The noise was really from a ship in distress, a sound of heavy guns

coming strange and solemn through the evening stillness, but Louie had gone away before this was discovered, and so, as soon as she reached her room, she asked the maid who was waiting to undress her if she had heard the noise, and if she knew what it meant. The servant had heard the noise, "But," said she, "I don't know what it was; I never heard any noise like it; I thought the end of the world must be coming." "The end of the world!" repeated Louie in an awestruck voice, "I never thought about that. Why did this noise make you think about the end of the world?"

"Oh because," replied the maid, "this noise was like the blowing of a loud trumpet, and I have heard that just before the end of the world a great trumpet will sound; it is called the last trump."

"And what will happen then?" said Louie.

"Why then the whole world and everything in it will be burned up," was the reply.

"The whole world burnt up!" Louie repeated this to herself, and she remembered having often read and heard words which described the awful scene. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great

noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works which are therein shall be burnt up." In the face of such a prospect what was the use of her frail little shelter; of what use to dream about a deathbed and long preparation when, before even death, judgment in another form might overtake her? And must this be Louie's prospect? Was there no hope? No way of escape?

By this time, some of the other children had come up to get ready for bed, and when Louie asked, "Must everyone who remains alive be burnt up?" one of them answered, "Before the day of the burning up of the world the Lord will come and take away His own people, and they will be safe with Him while all the dreadful judgments are going on." Louie said no more; she saw plainly that there were some who would be saved, saved from earthly judgments, from all those terrible woes told of in the book of the Revelation, from all the horror of fear that would cause the wicked to call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Oh! how Louie's heart quailed as she lay there in bed and these scenes passed before her mind, and when she

remembered that all these woes, dreadful as they were, were not the end, but that, beyond them, there would be yet that judgment which she had so long dreaded, and which her conscience told her must for her end in eternal misery, it was no wonder that, since she still stood alone, and did not come to Jesus who would have given her rest, it was a long, long time before she fell asleep.





CHAPTER VII.

A SAD MESSAGE.



VEN Louie's heart, deceitful as it was, and full of busy thoughts and imaginations, could not present much to comfort her under this fresh shadow, the shadow of a cloud that was very near at hand, a cloud which she could do nothing to keep away, and which might at any time burst in a storm of de-

struction upon her head. A little, little hope was all that she could find now, a hope that, notwithstanding all that she too well knew about her own self and her own ways, she was not so bad as multitudes who peopled the earth; and that perhaps, compared with them, the Lord, of whose love she had so often heard,

would forgive her her sins and would, in His mercy, take her to the place of safety when He took her many kind Christian friends and all the rest of His people.

But oh, what a deceitful hope this was! The sinner, whether a child or a grown person, will not be examined by the light of what he is, compared with other sinners, but by the light of that God who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all. Felix, the brave, the learned, the respected Roman governor, "trembled" when he heard of righteousness and judgment to come; and well indeed may any unsaved child tremble at the thought of that righteousness and judgment to come. So, in the midst of the groundless hopes presented by her own deceitful heart, Louie yet found room for many a doubt and many an anxious fear.

It was on a Sunday, not long after this, that she received a sad message: many a blessed message of salvation, of forgiveness, love and peace lay within the covers of the little Bible which she so often held in her hand, but all these messages she had not yet turned to; she had not yet learned to refuse her own heart and her own thoughts and to listen to the thoughts of God, and so now she was to receive, as a message, the testimony of her own heart when for

a moment, in presence of the truth of God, its bulwarks of deceit were broken down, and its false hopes became like chaff which the wind driveth away.

Every Sunday, the children took a long drive to an old-fashioned little building which was three miles away: a great yellow carriage came to the door, and it was well that it was a great one, for when Mamma and Miss R. and all the children, as well as a big, redcovered basket which held their books had been stowed away, there was not a corner or crevice left for anything or anybody else. Many other people went to that same old-fashioned building, for a dear old saint and servant of God usually preached there; he had the hoary head which is a crown of glory, and a very kind smiling face was seen beneath the snow-white locks. but with all his goodness, I doubt whether this old man ever told in plain words how a sinner could be saved; and though Louie heard and understood a great deal of what he said, and could give a little account of it when asked to do so, she never heard anything that answered the many questions which disturbed her heart

However, one Sunday, just before the preaching began, all the people stood up to sing a hymn, and at

once this hymn arrested Louie's attention, for it began thus—

"Hark! that shout of rapturous joy Bursting forth from yonder cloud; Jesus comes, and through the sky Angels tell their joy aloud."

So this hymn was on the very subject which had been so deeply engaging Louie's thoughts for the last few weeks; it spoke of the Lord's coming for His saints, but oh! how different were the thoughts told of in those verses from the thoughts which that same blessed subject awoke in Louie's unhappy heart! The hymn went on to say—

"Rise, ye saints, He comes for you, Rise and meet Him in the air."

And it was then that Louie received the sad message, the testimony of her own unrenewed, unreconciled, heart. "You are not one of those saints," said her heart; "you will not rejoice in that day, you will not rise to meet the Lord, you will be left behind, you will not share the joy, your portion will be judgment." An awakened conscience, a heart aroused, can testify to us of our own guilt and ruin, but it can do no more.

Louie, taking counsel with her own heart, got only a testimony of judgment; it is the testimony of God as given in His word which alone can speak peace to the guilty conscience and rest to the troubled heart, and this is the testimony called, in the Epistle of John, the record. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Louie received the testimony of her own heart, but she did not receive the testimony of God, and so she went home that day with a heavy burden upon her; still, the true testimony of her heart was better than its deceitful hopes. She felt sure now that there was only one hope, whether to deliver from death and judgment or to give joy and peace in the thought of the Lord's coming, and this was to be a child of God. No child of God would be left behind; Louie felt quite sure of that, and she earnestly wished that she were a child of God, but how was she to become one? If she had only looked at the Gospel of John, the first chapter and twelfth verse, she would have found there the answer to her question: "As many as received him," that is Christ Jesus, the Son of God whom the Father

sent to be the Saviour of the world; "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Instead of reading and, in obedience of faith, receiving this word. Louie looked into books which contained the words and ways of men, and there she found things which puzzled and troubled her very much. One book said, "If you want to go to heaven you must love Jesus." This troubled her more than anything, for she felt that she did not love God, or Jesus the Son of God. This was dreadful, but it was the truth, and it is still true of every unsaved, unreconciled person; for the natural heart does not, and cannot, love God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.) Until "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us," we are "enemies in our minds by wicked works." We know, whenever we begin to think carefully, that we have done a great many things which are evil and displeasing to God; we know also that our thoughts, ways, and desires are not such as suit the holy God, and while we thus examine our own hearts we cannot but feel that God will be, as a Judge, against us; thus we are at enmity with Him. Sad indeed this is, while all the time it stands written that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." It is quite true that none will be in heaven who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema," that is, accursed; still, it is not anything of our love to Christ, but only and entirely His love to us, which fits us for and brings us to the place of blessing. "He loved me and gave himself for me." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "We love him because he first loved us."

These were days of sad trouble to Louie; she tasted indeed the bondage and torment of fear. Like the wicked person spoken of in Proverbs xxviii. 1, she was ready to flee when no man pursued. Often and often, at the slightest alarm, she was filled with fright; even when there was no alarm, when at night the house was all quiet, the quiet brought no sleep to Louie; she would fear lest that stillness were the stillness of a house from which all were gone but herself. Sometimes she would jump out of bed and run into the next room to look at the other children; there they were, quietly asleep in their beds, and Louie would go back

to hers. Sometimes she would cry out, and a maid would come running up to see what could be the matter, and would find nothing which, to her mind, could have caused the child's distress; and Louie was often told that this habit of screaming at night was a very foolish one, and that she was getting quite too old to continue such disturbances.

One night in particular, she had gone away on a short visit with her mother. There were several other visitors in the house, and Louie was particularly desired not to scream after she was in bed, but, if she wanted to see any one, to ring the bell: the bellrope hung close by her hand, at the bedside, and so it seemed that all would be well. Louie did not at all wish to ring for a strange maid, who would certainly, if she did so, think her very strange; for she never felt that she could tell any one what was in her heart or what caused her fears, and so, when the help she so loudly entreated arrived, it generally appeared that she wanted nothing; and often she was told that she must have been dreaming, and called out in her sleep. On this night, Mamma came and gave Louie a goodnight kiss, and saw her tucked up snugly in bed, and then, with many injunctions about the bellrope, left

her. Louie tried hard to go to sleep, but in the strange room this was even more difficult than usual, and presently she began listening to the few sounds which reached her from a distant part of the house, but as the time went on these grew fainter, and at last, with all her listening, she could perceive nothing but that silence which was more terrible to her than the most alarming noise. Had the Lord come and taken away everybody out of the house except herself? Was she at last left alone?

The room was quite dark; Louie sat up and listened, but not a sound could she hear. She could bear it no longer, but remembering, even at that moment, what she had been told about not screaming, she seized the rope at her side and pulled it with all her might. Then again she listened for the sound of a footstep which would assure her that the dreadful moment, the day when she should be left alone for judgment, was not yet come. She listened, oh! how eagerly, but she heard nothing, not a movement; again she pulled the rope, again and yet again, no footstep answered. Often Louie had feared that the coming of the Lord had overtaken her, as it will overtake the wicked, like a thief in the night; but now it was more than a fear,

she felt almost sure. What could this dreadful, this persistent silence mean but an empty house? No consideration for what anybody might think of her could restrain her now; she sprang from her bed with a great cry, she ran to the door and seized the handle, she felt that she must escape from that silent room. But she could not; the door was fastened. Louie's utmost strength was of no avail, she shook and pulled, but the door would not yield. However, the silence at last was broken, not only by her own terrible cries, but by the sound of many feet hastening along the passage to her room. At first Louie could hardly hear or understand, so great was her excitement, but presently she distinguished well-known voices, and then her anguish was stilled. The Lord had not come yet; the hour of judgment had not overtaken her yet, and soon she was able to listen and to understand that, in her hurry, she had pulled a wrong rope which did not ring the bell, but which had moved the bolt of her door and fastened it. Thus no bell had been heard by the servants below, and no answering sounds had reached her above.

Louie opened the door and she breathed freely once more, indeed she was able presently to feel a good deal ashamed for all the confusion she had caused. Every one thought that she must have awaked suddenly from a very dreadful dream, but she knew well that the cause of her fears was no dream, but a truth, a truth most blessed for the children of God, but awful indeed for the unprepared. Like a thief, that moment which is the hope of the saint, will take away from the sinner every hope, every joy, everything that he ever loved; and Louie knew that she was a sinner, but alse! she did not yet know the sinner's Friend.





CHAPTER VIII.

SHADY PLACES.



HIS sad night made a very deep impression upon Louie; she began to listen carefully when anything was said or read about the children of God, but still she could not find out the right beginning; she yet knew not how a sinner, one by nature a child of wrath, becomes a child of God, a vessel of mercy, a partaker

of the inheritance of the saints in light. Like Nicodemus, she needed yet to learn that solemn truth, "Ye must be born again." Though she had often read the third chapter of John's Gospel, she yet was foolish enough to think that her own efforts could bring her to the blessed position she so much desired to reach;

she hoped that if she could obey those commandments which are given in the Epistles to the children of God, and could feel as children of God were said to feel, she should be able to satisfy her own heart, to assure herself that she was a child of God, and to win the favour of God. Only think what a mistake this was, when God had done a work through His Son Jesus Christ, when God had made known His perfect delight in that work and in the One who had finished the work, and had commanded everyone to look unto Him and be saved. Louie was looking into herself to see what works she could do, and was hoping to win the favour of God when all, yes all His favour, has been poured out upon Christ, the Son of His love, and can only be enjoyed by those who are in Christ. But notwithstanding all this, which was so plainly made known in her own Bible, Louie began to try and mend her ways and her thoughts; they needed a very great deal of mending; she soon found that out. It seemed to her that she tried very hard, I do not quite know about that, but at any rate she found this trying very hard Sometimes she felt angry, when reproved or when deprived of something which she much wished to enjoy, and yet she had to try to be good tempered and gentle. Sometimes her lessons seemed long to her, and she was inclined to be idle; sometimes they seemed difficult or dull, and she was inclined to be careless, but she had to try and be diligent, attentive and painstaking; beyond all this, how impossible she found it, with all her trying, to feel right. Did she feel that love to God, that delight in prayer, that rejoicing in the word of God, that kindliness to others and denying of herself which she knew were marks of the children of God? No, indeed, far from it; her doings and feelings were only disappointing to herself. How then could they satisfy God or gain favour from Him?

Sometimes, Louie felt hopeless, sometimes, careless and inclined to give up trying, but she dared not, dreary as the task was and useless as it seemed, for all her hope was in her own efforts. She had not yet learnt her lesson, a lesson which all must learn who would enjoy the blessed sense of the favour of God: "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Louie wondered at times why she should be so troubled with fears and failures, the other children seemed to have no such feelings, and she saw no signs in the grown up people around her of anxiety or

alarm about their present state or their eternal future. To be sure, grown up people did not, as far as Louie could see, commit sins, but from what she knew of her own heart she could scarcely venture to hope that, even when she grew older, it would produce what would satisfy her, or what would please God. Louie supposed, as she saw no one anxious, and heard no one asking any of the many questions which disturbed her, that all around her were safe. I am not surprised at her supposing this, for it is indeed astonishing that people who hear of judgment to come can go on for a moment unconcerned, without seeking to be assured, through faith in Christ Jesus, that their sins are forgiven, that they have been delivered from judgment, and are numbered among the blood-bought saints of God

Some among Louie's friends were really children of God, but in that place the Gospel of God's grace to sinners, and salvation for the lost was but little known in its simplicity; and no one ever thought of asking another the important question, "Are you saved?" No one had ever said to Louie, Are you saved? Are you happy and at peace? Do you know that your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake? When anyone

spoke particularly to the children about the things of God it was generally to say what a happy thing it was to be a child of God, what a happy place heaven was, and how dreadful the doom of unrepentant sinners; or else to set before the children what sort of conduct was to be looked for from the children of God. Louie often read of conversions, but they were conversions of heathen or of Roman Catholics; sometimes, when she read of their simple faith and joy, and of the good fruits produced in them, she envied them, ignorant and uncivilised though they might be. Deep down in her heart she felt almost sure that she needed a direct ray of light and life from God, in fact needed conversion, just as much as did the idol-serving heathen, or the poor slave of pope and priest; but she would never have ventured to say such a thing, and I do not think that anyone in the place would have uttered such a thought either.

There was one dear lady who was a very kind friend to the children, and they all loved her; she loved them too, and would often invite them to go and see her, and her great pleasure then was to teach them to sing hymns, to which she played an accompaniment on the piano. All this was very sweet, yet it made Louie very

unhappy and sometimes even angry, for how could she take any pleasure in singing about what happy Christians feel while yet she knew not, from moment to moment, how soon the hour might come which would begin an eternity of misery for her? This lady liked to play softly on the piano (she did everything very softly and gently), while the children sang M'Cheyne's beautiful verses beginning, "I once was a stranger to grace and to God;" but how could Louie sing "I once was a stranger" when she felt at that moment such a stranger, so forlorn, as she saw everyone around her singing and looking well content in prospect (as she thought) of a happiness to which it seemed impossible for her to find the way? Alas! she did not turn to Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." With all her longings and all her questions, she never looked for an answer anywhere but in her own heart, and light and life could not be found there.

All this time, though it may surprise you to hear it, Louie appeared to be a very cheerful little girl; she was very fond of play in the garden, the field and the rush common; or when the school-room, on a halfholiday, was dismantled of its accustomed dignities and turned into a steam-boat, a coach, or a group of cottages, inhabited by poor Irishwomen, all with very unmanageable babies, Louie was one of the foremost in the game. None of Louie's companions or friends guessed half the thoughts of that questioning heart; but God saw it all, read it all, understood it all, and the Love which watched over this poor, needy little girl would not allow the sorrows of that heart to be smothered over, because He meant to heal them Himself and to heal them perfectly; and so, often in the very midst of enjoyment, something would occur which would stir up all the troubles and the questions.

It happened thus at a time of very great excitement and pleasure in the village. It was early summer, and a great General was coming home from a far off country, where he had won many victories; his daughter was then staying in the village, and, as she was a friend of Louie's mother, the children were to have a special share in all that took place.

Great preparations were to be made, for the whole village meant to do honour to Lord G. Lessons, for several days, were set aside, and the children spent nearly the whole of the bright summer day in the garden, helping to gather and to sort flowers, with which garlands and nosegays and other ornaments were to be made. You may think that this was very pleasant work, and, like many things of earth, the preparation and expectation were almost the best part of the whole; at least it proved to be so to Louie, for, as you will hear, the long-desired day, before it was ended, was shadowed with one of the many dark clouds which hung over her, and which not only hung over Louie, but which hang over every unsaved person, though he may not, as Louie did, see or fear one of them. Still it is true that while "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" and is not that a dark cloud, a cloud which may well cast a heavy shadow over any heart.

The children very much enjoyed their out-door work, and the talking and planning and hearing of all that was to be done, but still they were very glad when at last the long-expected day arrived. Early one morning they all stood at the bottom of the green slope which fronted the house, and saw Lord G. arriving with their friend and her children, and they watched the horses taken out of his carriage, that he

might be drawn by a number of men, who stood in readiness at the door of the hotel where he was to stay. There was a great deal of shouting, and waving of hats, flags, garlands and pocket handkerchiefs, in all of which the children, no doubt, did their full part, and some hours later they started on a boating expedition, which was to fill up the afternoon of this eventful day.

Now, the people of the village could settle where they would put arches, and how they would adorn them with flowers, and where they would stop the carriage and draw it themselves to do honour to the great general; and they could choose in what places they would plant flags or strew flowers, but there was one important matter in which they could neither choose nor settle, and that was the weather; and so it happened that, although the morning was fine and the afternoon fixed upon for the boating expedition was bright, a great storm of wind arose suddenly while they were out at sea, and the boat began to toss about in a manner that was very unpleasant to most of its passengers, and which alarmed Louie exceedingly; for, you know, she was still like "the wicked" who "flee when no man pursueth." Great generals, holidays, garlands and rejoicings, all were now as nothing compared with the great waves that rose against the boat. The boatmen did not appear to be disturbed, and no one seemed so much alarmed as Louie; but perhaps, as she thought, they had none of them the same terrible cause for fear that she had, namely, the sense of sins unforgiven, and the expectation of judgment which she was unprepared to meet. So, notwithstanding all that was said to re-assure her, she could only cry out in her terror; and though at last she reached home in safety, with all the rest, the remembrance of the long-looked-for pleasure of that day was quite darkened by the unhappy feelings with which it closed.

How disappointing are the pleasures of this world! how different from those pleasures at God's right hand where there is fulness of joy, in that city where there shall be no night, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof.

But there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth . . . but they that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

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CHAPTER IX.

NEW SCENES.



HUS, summers and winters passed by, carrying Louie along the road of daily life with its ups and downs, its lights and shadows, its smooth paths and rough places, until one day a very new place was reached; at least it was outwardly a new place, but it was not yet that place which Louie needed to reach, where

all things are new. This was a new country, but where, with all its novelties, she would find the same perplexities, the same dangers and disappointments as on any other part of this sin-spoiled earth.

This new country was so far from the home among the hills and rush-fields that it required a journey of two days to reach it; but I must tell you that one member of the party, who had taken the former journey to a new home, was missing—this was Pussy; yes; poor, pretty white Pussy had also become wilful, wandering Pussy, and, like many wilful ones before her, had come to a sad end. She had taken many walks with the children to the hill cottages, and perhaps this had unsettled her mind, so that she found it dull even to remain for two days together quietly at home, and so, as the expeditions to the hill were not frequent enough to please her restless will, she had taken to visiting on her own account where she was neither invited nor wished for. For this impropriety she had been often punished, but alas! all the punishment was useless, either to mend Pussy's manners, or to save her from the fate which overtook her. As soon as she got over her punishment she re-commenced her wanderings, returning to her home when she pleased, and I dare say, like wilful people, she thought that she could always do as she pleased, but it was not so: once more she went out, day after day passed and she was still away; search and inquiries were made, but brought no signs and no tidings of Pussy, until one day she was discovered, lying dead, in a lonely spot on the sea shore.

This sad ending to her favourite had cost Louie a good many tears, but it had happened long before the removal, and I don't think the arrival at the new country was clouded by any recollections of poor, white Pussy.

There was so much before the children at that moment, that there was scarcely a glance to spare for anything behind. The release from the steamboat was in itself a pleasant prospect, for though it was a fine May day, the boat had trembled and tossed enough to make it a very undesirable abode to some, even for the short space of two hours, and a little extra tossing as they crossed the bar made the sight of the two long, wooden piers, between which they were to steam smoothly to the place of landing, all the more welcome. The water between these piers certainly was calm, but no calmness was to be found anywhere else; such shouting and screaming from those on land, such hurrying to and fro, such pulling of ropes, such crowding and hallooing; you might have thought it was the first time a steamer had ever reached that spot, but in reality the great event was one of every-day occurrence. Everybody on board the steamer seemed anxious to be the very first to leave it, but as only a few people

could pass slowly, one by one, over the little railed ladder which led to the place of landing, patience had to be exercised, or at any rate waiting had to be endured, and thus the children found themselves, not among the first, but rather the last who left the boat: then, ropes on each side of them conducted them, whether they would or not, up to the door of a barelooking building which was in front of them. Some stern-looking officials stood on the steps of this building and bade them enter, and Louie knew very well what they were sent in there for, and felt half amused and half indignant at the prospect before her.

This bare-looking building was the Custom House, and there all the passengers had to be searched lest they should have, concealed upon their persons, anything which they ought rather to shew to the officers and pay duty upon. Louie wondered very much, knowing nothing about the laws or necessities of trade as it then was, why the French people should object to your bringing new English goods to their shores, and why people should be so anxious to have the very things they were not allowed to bring, or why, at least, the people could not trust one another. She remembered the stories she had heard of how persons had concealed

penknives, needles, scissors and other most unpleasant additions to wearing apparel among their clothes, and one lady had even worn a bag containing gunpowder beneath her dress. Whether Louie looked like one having a taste for forbidden supplies of knives and gunpowder I cannot say, but she and the other children were received by some woman in a little side room of the Custom House; there, their hats were taken off and the linings well examined, their jackets followed and even their dresses; their pockets were turned inside out and still the search went on, and Louie was beginning to wonder what next she should lose when the woman appeared satisfied and began to restore to her her clothes, much to her satisfaction; but it was some time before they reached the street and could continue their journey through the town. The noise and bustle outside was still going on, and the screaming being mostly in French made it sound all the more strange, though any such bustle would have been a novelty to these little country folks. Mingled with the strange voices there was a clatter of multitudes of wooden shoes on the smooth, marble pavement, the wooden shoe costume being completed by blue or violet stockings, bright scarlet petticoats, white caps and little coloured shawls; but the house prepared for them was reached at last, and the sitting-room might have seemed much like any other they had been in except that the carpet, to give it a feeling of softness to which by nature it had no right, was under-lined with a thick layer of straw; this made it difficult and, as the children thought, very funny to walk upon. Vain would have been any efforts now from the camel and buffalo to awake a business-like clatter; even the children, with all the running hither and thither which unpacking and settling into a new abode necessitated, could neither hear nor produce the sound of a single footfall.

This strangely carpeted apartment was only one which received them for a short time, and a little later they were all so settled in their ordinary routine that you would scarcely have believed that they had come to a new home at all. There was no field near this new abode, and, on the whole, its chief feature, I think, was lessons: these increased so much that even those in the schoolroom, which had so far outdone the studies in Marine Villa, would have been thought very little of. Miss R. was now assisted by several masters, and Louie had to do her full share in preparing the lessons

and exercises which alone would satisfy these frequent and most persevering visitors: this left her, perhaps, less time for reading and thinking than she had formerly had, and sometimes, for days together, her mind seemed wholly taken up with the things which are seen and which are temporal.

Even the persevering masters required some rest and had many other pupils in other houses, and among all the lessons the children yet found time, especially in wet weather, to make very diligent use of a large, bare room which ended on one side in a wide glass door and which was called the playroom; and certainly, whatever else in this world may have been misnamed or misused, this apartment was exceedingly well-named and well-used, for unless a housemaid found a little occupation there occasionally, no business of any kind ever was carried on between its walls. There, the girls swung and the boys climbed ropes which hung from the ceiling, and both boys and girls played many wonderful games which at this time were generally of a warlike kind and had an historical foundation. I fear that the old friends, the elephant, camel, and buffalo, who had reigned in the nursery at Marine Villa, had no place allotted to them here, and

would have been quite unequal to any of the requirements of this new playroom.

In fine weather, the children's leisure time was generally spent in walking, and there were, round this new home, many places of interest to be seen; the ramparts, just such as those read of in history, were a favourite resort. These great rampart walls were many, many feet in height, and the whole distance round them was more than a mile; the outer edge of the great wall was four or five feet thick, and the great walk round the top was several yards wide. From this high walk the whole of that part of the town which was outside the walls could be seen, as well as several miles of country up the river, and when you passed through the great turreted gateways, whose heavy wooden doors were now never shut, because it was a time of peace, it was easy to fancy what the sieges told of in history must have been like; how the people from outside houses would be anxious to flock within the safe enclosure, how hopeless must have been the task of attempting to break through those gigantic walls, and yet how terrible the condition of those within, when bolts and bars kept them tightly shut up, while the hundreds of soldiers in the plains without prevented any approach of friends or food to the unhappy prisoners within the city.

Saturday afternoons (instead of taking the usual walk) the children were allowed to spend in the garden, and here they found much occupation, though not of the kind usually supposed to engage persons in a garden. This garden was not large, and being exactly shut in by three high stone walls, the fourth side being enclosed by the back of the house, it was not, in itself, a very interesting place. A narrow bed skirted the walls on each of the three sides, but the beds were greatly taken up with the growth of large pear-trees; and though the pears were very abundant and acceptable, they did not offer much occupation or interest. except at the time when they were ripe; but the children found means to make themselves very busy notwithstanding. The back of the house ended in a square terrace, paved with large flagstones, which led by a long flight of steps down into the garden; and under the terrace and a portion of the house was a large empty vault, at least it was supposed to be empty, but it was afterwards discovered that a company of rats had taken it on lease without either asking leave or paying rent. The front wall of this vault, together with the side wall of the flight of steps, made such a very nice half square that it gave the children, for want of other garden employment, the thought of building two other walls and roofing in the whole so as to form a little house. Quite a strong, real house it was meant to be, and it rose before their imaginations as a most commodious and agreeable dwelling, the only misgiving being lest their elders should not perceive its great advantages, and so should object to the idea of their occupying it permanently, but the building was begun in good earnest. Much labour was necessary, for, except a few stones that were found lying around and within the vault, all that was needed for this important building had to be fetched from a lonely beach which was nearly two miles distant—the mortar, too, was obtained from the same place. A mason might have objected to the use of this mortar, which was nothing else than soft clay: it was abundant among the rocks on the beach, but it was hard work to dig it up in great lumps and to fill the barrows with it, and it took a long time then to wheel it home all the way from the distant shore; so, as on most days of the week their time was too limited to allow the whole afternoon which was necessary for these expeditions, one

Saturday had to be spent in bringing materials and the next in building them together Many a stone, too, got laid in its bed of soft clay at odd moments during the week, and so the walls rose to quite an imposing height and the doorway appeared; but I fear that the work—being performed by so many masons, each of whom directed himself (or herself!) according to his own desires—presented a rather irregular appearance.

All this time winter was hurrying on, and this year he brought in his train such cold winds, severe frosts, and heavy snows that even the children preferred the already roofed and finished house to their garden mansion, and so that came by degrees to be deserted; it was never roofed, and by spring-time little remained of all their labours but a ruined heap.





CHAPTER X.





THER events had occupied that winter besides the building of the garden house, the blowing of wintry winds and falling of snow; a terrible war was going on, and Louie heard many sad tales of the sufferings endured by the soldiers who were exposed to cold and sword, and of the sorrow of their friends when

news of the deaths of fathers, husbands, and brothers reached them. Altogether it was a gloomy time. The pear-trees stood forlorn in the silent garden, and their thin shivering branches looked as though they had lost all life and heart, and would never again bear the juicy pears that had ripened so often on the sometimes

sunny wall. Crowds of little brown feathered beggars collected on the stone terrace, and found themselves there safe and welcome to the feasts of crumbs, which always plentifully scattered the flagstones and windowsills; the children had some warming games in the play-room, but very often they gathered round the fire, and while they helped to make lint, their hearts were quite sad in thinking about the hundreds of suffering soldiers far away, lying shivering and wounded among the biting winds and cruel snows of a Russian winter.

But at last, even this winter, with all its dreary strength of frost and storm, began to give way before the milder breezes and melting rays of a spring sun; the worst of the war too, it was hoped, was over, and suddenly, everybody everywhere seemed to awake to the fact that spring was coming, and to be in a bustle. They painted their shutters bright green, and their houses bright yellow; and those who did not paint did their best with mops and buckets, to share in the general brightening. Children crowded every street corner, full of noise and play, and armed with wicker battledores, by means of which they sent red, blue, yellow, and green shuttlecocks flying in all directions.

As to the trees, more bustle went on among them than even among the people. Every branch of every tree was swelling with fresh spring sap; the tiniest twig was not forgotten, and when the branch was so full that swelling would not do for it any longer, it broke out into little juicy buds, which softened and stretched until, by degrees, tiny leaves popped out, and without any help of paint or brushes, the branches put on suits of bright new green. Besides all this, trees which stood in quiet corners experienced quite an extra sort of bustle which those in the squares and streets of the town knew nothing about; all the little birds were glad enough to leave off begging on doorsteps and window-sills, and instead of beggars, were fast becoming owners of lovely nests among leafy branches. and were making as much noise as possible, to express what they felt in looking forward to the joy of seeing tiny, smooth eggs lying amid the soft moss and wool which lined their little homes.

However, all this stir seemed to Louie quite like nothing at all, compared with what happened one morning, in a quiet square in the town: it was the very square in front of her bedroom window, and so it was quite a difficulty for her to get dressed in time for breakfast, for she was only just awaking when the beating of a great drum announced some unusual event, and losing no more time than was needful in reaching the window, she saw line after line of travel-worn soldiers entering the square; there, they formed themselves into companies, and their commanding officer rode briskly from one to the other, until every two soldiers were provided with a little slip of paper. "They are being billeted," said Augustine, the children's maid; "these soldiers have come from distant parts of the country; on each of those little slips of paper somebody's address is written, and the soldiers who receive it will come to stay at that house until the camp on the cliffs is ready for them all to go to."

The children hoped much that some soldiers would be sent to them, and every moment that could possibly be spared from the business of dressing was spent in watching the couples who marched from the square; and at last two soldiers did come, nearer and nearer, until they actually were ringing at the door. I do not know whether their elders were quite as anxious to have these unknown guests as were the children, but, at any rate, they were made welcome, and very grateful, quiet occupants of their part of the house, which was

a great granary under the roof, these poor stranger soldiers were.

Many another couple came to the house after these first, for hundreds of soldiers passed through the town on their way to the great camp on the cliffs, where they waited in readiness for orders to join the army in Russia, and fill up the blanks which had been made in many a regiment by the fearful slaughter which took place during that terrible war.

The children, and numbers of other people, frequently visited the great camp, for it was an interesting sight to see the rows of neat little huts so cleverly and quickly built of clay; some of the soldiers took a great deal of pains to make the little abode as home-like as possible, and employed their spare time usefully. The children were particularly pleased with some bunches of lovely flowers which these clever and grateful soldiers made from their bread, and presented to those who had shewn them kindness when they were billeted in In order to make these pretty flowers, they the town. rolled the soft, crummy part of their loaf between their hands, until it became a smooth paste; this was moulded into thin petals, formed exactly in the shape of geranium or rose petals, then coloured with soft powdered chalk, fastened together into a proper shape, and surrounded with bright green leaves, all made of bread, except the stalks, which were of wire.

But pleasure and interest were not the only things that drew visitors to the camp, for it was a solemn sight to look upon row after row of the little huts and to remember that each contained two soldiers, immortal beings who might be called upon to leave the peaceful camp for a scene of danger, and, to very many, of death; so, as well as hundreds of soldiers, hundreds upon hundreds of Testaments and little books came into the town, and it was the business of conveying and distributing these which generally engaged Louie's mother and her friends when they visited the camp. Louie herself often helped in carrying the Testaments and little books, and perhaps sometimes gave one away. She heard a great deal of conversation about the soldiers, and those who were active about the Testaments seemed very anxious that the poor men should be converted; and while Louie listened to all the hopes and wishes expressed for them, she felt that she needed the same. She seemed now suddenly, instead of only a reader, to have become a part, an actual part, of one of the many stories she had read about preachings and conversions. but she longed to change sides, and take the place which she felt in truth to be hers, among the needy and unsaved ones. It was, no doubt, the goodness of God which awakened this wish in Louie's heart, for there was nothing in the conversation she heard which could have given rise to it. The wish most constantly expressed about the soldiers was that they should become Protestants, and Louie was a Protestant, a very firm one too, though whether there was anything more Christ-like in her Protestantism than in the foolish superstition of the Romanists is very doubtful. When the poor ill-taught papists crowded to touch a fragment of an image, said to have been carved by St. Luke, Louie looked on with a feeling that was very far from pity or love; and when they bowed their heads, in obedience to the priest's tinkling bell, before the wafer which they called holy, Louie held her head stiffly erect. I think that had she obtained a clear view of her heart at this time, she would have seen, in the midst of all the fears and self-reproaches and longings, a great deal of pride and self-righteousness at work there.

On such occasions she was, I fear, like those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others," while perhaps some poor untaught soldier, reading for the first time in his little camp hut of Him who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, was crying out "God be merciful to me a sinner," and getting an answer of peace. "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Could such a covering bring peace to the conscience, or give boldness in the day of judgment?

No. It is not our righteousness but God's perfect love, shewn in His giving His own Son to be the propitiation for our sins, which casteth out fear. Louie had not learned that love yet, but it still followed her, for it is perfect: it would not allow Satan to satisfy her with her own wretched little rags of righteousness, neither would that perfect love leave her to be deceived by pleasures of this life which, just at this time, began to open with fresh promises around her. She was invited to pay a visit of some length to a relative, whom she had not seen since she was the tiny child who pointed her way down the reading book, and then delighted herself with the elephant and other toys in the nursery.

A friend who was going in the same direction, took care of Louie through her journey, but it was the first time in her life that she had been on a visit quite alone; and when her friend wished her good-bye and left her at her aunt's door she felt like a very shy little girl, and almost wished herself quietly at home again. These uncomfortable feelings, however, soon vanished before the kindness which was shewn her, and the many new pleasures which were put in her way. Louie much enjoyed the conversation, the music, the pictures, the drives, the visits and many other things; and she might have been quite happy if only she had not been what she was, a poor weak child, who could not for one moment preserve herself alive, or secure to herself the enjoyments which surrounded her; a traveller along the road of life, who found herself, as the moments passed by, drawing ever nearer to a solemn eternity. That eternity was a deep reality to Louie. It is a reality, a solemn, an ever approaching reality to every one, though some may never have waited to think about it.

Often in the very height of the pleasures, a question would rush unbidden into Louie's mind; at least, a question unbidden by herself, but sent perhaps by the love which followed her. It was this: What will be

the end of these things? Will these things, pleasing as they appear, give us any help in the day of judgment?

No wonder, when such a question was sounding in Louie's mind, sounding and resounding and getting no answer; no wonder that she looked grave, and did not, at times, shew the bright face of interest, which those who were doing so much to entertain her might have expected. One evening, Louie had been taken to the house of some cousins; two or three little friends of her own age were there, and older people also; some very fine music was performed on various instruments, and some more childish entertainments were provided for the younger ones; but somehow, before the evening came to an end, Louie found herself sitting in a quiet corner, and from thence looking on at the scene which, though bright, appeared before her, at that moment, in all its real vanity and uselessness. All these people love me, thought Louie, they mean to give me pleasure, but oh! how I wish that they would shew their love in some other, some better way. Louie hardly knew in what way, but I dare say that her face, while she made these reflections, was very grave and unsuited to its bright surroundings; her aunt noticed it, and when they reached home reproved her, telling her how unmannerly and ungrateful it was, when everyone was taking pains to make the evening agreeable, to sit in a corner and engage herself with her own thoughts.

"The other little girls," said Louie's aunt, "did not behave in this way; they tried to be happy, and to shew that they were pleased."

"I did feel grateful," replied poor Louie, "and I should have been happy and pleased if only I knew what was to become of me in the future; but, until I know that, I cannot take pleasure in enjoyments which, it seems to me, will all pass away and be quite useless in the day of judgment."

Louie's aunt was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but she did not then know that any one could say—I am saved, I have Eternal Life; neither had she learned that the death of Christ delivers from this present evil world, or that the love of Christ satisfies those longings of the heart which enjoyments of this world seek in vain to still. All this was unknown to her, and so the child's simple speech seemed to her very extraordinary; but she was full of love towards her little niece, and felt sorry for the poor little fearful heart, so she answered kindly.

"I believe, my dear child, that the Lord will draw

you to Himself, but you must try to behave more properly in society another time; and you must never speak in this way again, or people will think you are mad."

Louie felt some comfort from the first part of her aunt's reply, but it was not the help she wanted, and she wondered very much why eternal realities were to be kept out of sight, and whether the things which are seen and which are temporal ought to engage all, or nearly all, the time and attention of those who were to live for ever. Perhaps, while she made these reflections, Louie thought herself wiser than those around her; I dare say she hardly understood all that she felt that night, but since her hope was still in herself, and in what she could offer to recommend herself to God, she was very foolish, and had yet many a lesson to learn.

Soon after this evening's conversation, Louie left her aunt and went on another visit; this was to an old lady, and the days spent in that old-fashioned house were much quieter than the days spent in London had been. The change suited Louie's present frame of mind; there were some younger ladies in the house who were very kind to the little visitor, and these

weeks were, on the whole, a time of enjoyment; but the last day came, and Louie was to go away in the afternoon. A little while before she left, one of the younger ladies took her into her own room and, after talking affectionately to her for a little while, said, "Now I must leave you for a few minutes, and while I am gone you may look through my book-case and choose some book which you would like to take away with you as a remembrance of me."

Louie was very fond of books, and she went at once to the book-case, eager to make her choice. As she rapidly read over the many titles before her, her attention was arrested by an old-fashioned volume which, in its shabby binding, had remained for years unnoticed in its corner; but its title attracted Louie beyond everything, and at once her choice was made, she would have this book, "The Whole Duty of Man." She had just taken it from the shelf when her friend returned. "Well, have you made your choice?" "Yes," replied Louie, as she handed the book.

"Why! what is this?" said the lady, in astonishment, "The Whole Duty of Man! oh! that is a most old-fashioned book, I had forgotten that I possessed it, it is not at all meant for you. Here," she continued,

reaching down a bright volume from an upper shelf, "you will like this, I am sure," and she put it into Louie's hand. She had resolutely set the first choice aside, so Louie could say no more, and the time was going over; there was only just time to pack the unwelcome volume among her other possessions, to say her goodbyes and be off.

She went away much disappointed; she had seemed just within reach of what she needed, and it had been taken from her, for Louie's uneasy heart had been attracted by that word "Whole," and she thought that if only she had possessed a book which would teach her her whole duty, she should have found the way to that peace of conscience and rest of heart which she as yet sought after in vain.

Child as she was, she did not stay to consider that a man's book of instruction, however well meant, might have misled her; and how little she knew her own heart, since she believed it capable of answering to the claims of a holy God, however plainly set forth. She was like those Israelites at Sinai, who said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient." And scarcely had they spoken the words, when they made a golden calf to worship.



CHAPTER XI.

THE DOOR OF HOPE.



pleasures would not do; they could give no comfort; they could not provide the heart with anything that could support it in the thought of an ever-approaching judgment.

Self-righteousness would not do; it was ignorant and it was powerless. Worse than this, Louie's own heart would not do; it was con-

stantly inclined to the sins which yet burdened and terrified it; it constantly longed and went after those pleasures which were so vain, its only suggestion was that covering of self-righteousness which God had pronounced to be "as filthy rags" in His sight.

Louie began afresh to struggle against her own heart



just as she had struggled, long ago, when first she bebecame convinced that to be a child of God was the only hope of deliverance from the sinner's doom. But now her trouble was no longer in those outbreaks of naughtiness and heedlessness which, as a little child, had so often brought all her hopes to nothing; she could often pass through the day in a manner which brought no reproach from any around her, yet all the time her own heart constantly and bitterly reproached her, for she could not find within herself one spark of that love to God which yet, she knew, was due to Him who had made her, who had showered blessings upon her, and above all, had given His only-begotten Son to die for sinners. Louie would often refuse the books which her own mind delighted in, and, taking her Bible, would go out to a lonely bank beside a stream, and there would sit and read, and think, and sing some of the sweet hymns which happy children of God had written. But all was useless; none of these efforts ever produced in Louie's heart the feelings she so desired to find there; all the reading and the singing and the wishing only filled her heart with the dreary assurance of its own hardness and barrenness.

Oh! what was to become of poor Louie! Her need



was deep and real and constantly increasing, yet there was nothing around her, and nothing within her, to meet it.

But Louie was not left to despair. Just at this moment, a door opened before her, a little door, a darklooking door, but a door, nevertheless, of hope; she would tell all out to God. Yes, the secret which she had never told to man she would tell to God; she would own before Him that a multitude of sins witnessed against her, and proclaimed her worthy of no other portion than the lake of fire; that her own heart was so wicked, so deceitful, so foolish, that from it there was no hope; that all her efforts had been, and she felt sure would only be, useless; that if salvation was to reach her, it must be through the working of God's sovereign mercy, through a work in which she had no part; that if any good thing was ever to be found in her, it must be of God's own implanting. And this, this moment when Louie gave up all hope in herself, was the moment when God opened a door of hope before her. "Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him, God is a refuge for us."

It was only a door of hope, it was not salvation; it

was a strange mixture, a moment of entire hopelessness as to all that had been her trust, yet a moment that made her heart happy with a sweet, new hope. She could not have yet told how salvation would reach her, but she felt sure that, in some way, God, to whom she had committed all, would work for her. At times, she was earnest in expectation; at times, she was drawn away by cares and pleasures of this life, for she had still the same heart, weak, wicked and worthless; the only difference was that she was learning to look away from that heart, to distrust its thoughts, and to listen for the thoughts of God.

You may be sure that she was not disappointed; many little lessons and helps were sent to her during this time. One day, a stranger came to preach in the town near which she lived; he was said to preach in a manner quite unusual; some praised the new preacher much for his clearness, boldness, and earnestness; some thought his preaching rough and unpolished; but Louie thought that this new kind of preaching might be just what she was in need of, and in answer to her eager request, she was taken to hear the stranger.

It was a new style indeed, quite different from any of the many sermons which Louie had listened to before; and yet, what the preacher said was not new, it was but a proclamation in public of that which Louie's own heart had so long felt. The secret whispers of her own heart were "proclaimed upon the housetop"—all were alike: rich, poor, black, white, papist, protestant, learned, ignorant. "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It was a terrible word for those whom Satan had lulled to sleep with false ways and false hopes; an unwelcome word for those who desired to walk undisturbed in the broad way and not to hear that "it leadeth to destruction." Plenty were found to complain against the new preacher, but Louie's heart, like Lydia's of old, was opened by the Lord, so that she attended to the things spoken.

Not long after this, a little newspaper fell into Louie's hands; not one of those ordinary papers which tell what is going on in the world, what men are suffering and doing, but a paper setting forth what God was doing; for God was working most specially and graciously at that time, and many a needy soul had found, like Louie, in their most hopeless moment, a door of hope. Much Louie wondered as she read!

Not poor heathens, in lonely or half-civilised places,

not papist soldiers, but educated persons, living in just such towns as Louie's present home, children taught and brought up just as she herself had been, were every day being converted, were being turned from their own thoughts and their own ways to learn the thoughts and ways of God, were believing the very word of God, were finding the Saviour Jesus to be their Saviour, and were confessing, with joyful lips,-I am saved. Oh! this was what Louie needed, and she prayed that God would work in like manner in the place where she was. God was teaching Louie and, at that very time, while she was praying this prayer in her solitary corner, Christians had come together in the town with the same request, that God would graciously grant in that place an outpouring of the blessed shower which had refreshed so many far and near.





CHAPTER XII. SHINING WITHOUT SHADOW.



HE prayers were heard, and the preachers came; yes, two of the very preachers whose names were mentioned in the little newspaper, and by whom God had sent messages of deliverance and peace to many a needy soul, came to the very place where Louie was; a gospel preaching was announced,

and Louie was among the number of those who went to hear. Now, she thought, was the time for her to be delivered from her burden. She was surprised and disappointed, and perhaps you too will be surprised to hear, that she sat and listened and expected and hoped, but yet the evening wore away, all was over, and Louie left the building, as she had entered it, unsaved.

There may have been many reasons for this. Love had long watched over Louie, had long had patience with her unbelief, her hardness of heart, her carelessness, and her self-righteousness; but while Love had watched, the enemy of souls, Satan, had (no doubt) watched too, and had delighted in Louie's fears and sorrows, and in her readiness to receive the false and foolish thoughts which he stirred up in her heart. Doubtless he desired still to keep her as his slave, and as, through the mercy of God, Satan could not prevent her from desiring salvation or from seeking after it, he filled her mind with thoughts about the preachers and about herself, and occupied her heart with hoping something from the preachers, and so she got nothing. For no preachers, as we know, could save us, and also no preacher can bring us to the blessed peace-giving knowledge that our sins are forgiven, that we are children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. No word of a preacher, nothing but the word of God can give light to the soul: and the soul must have to do with Christ Jesus the Son of God, must hear His word by faith, before it can have eternal life. There is none other name (none but the name of Jesus) under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. But Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

So Louie came away from that preaching and from yet another without obtaining what she looked for, but God had not forgotten her; He was, no doubt, teaching her a lesson which she needed to learn. Perhaps, if while listening to the noted preachers, Louie had found herself freed from the burden of fears and questions which had so long oppressed her, she might afterwards have said, "Ah! I suffered all those years of torment for want of hearing the right preachers." But, as God ordered things, Louie was to learn, and would have to own, that the years of torment were the consequence of her own foolishness in listening to her own wicked and deceitful heart, being filled with her own thoughts, instead of waiting to hear the thoughts of God, "thoughts of peace and not of evil."

Thus several weeks passed on, and Louie still went from place to place; for God had, in His goodness, awakened a real need in her soul, and He did not allow it to be choked up with any of the many false comforts which Satan and man are so ready to bring forward; but at last "the time to favour her, yea the set time" was come. There was no great preacher that day, no crowded assembly, no stir or expectation; the wave of special blessing seemed to have almost passed away from the town and, except for a few precious fruits which it had left, things appeared to have dropped back into their usual quiet routine; but God can work without great preachers or expectant crowds, and Louie was sitting in a quiet room, in a very quiet little street, at a very quiet little Bible reading when the word reached her.

She had never guessed, when she took her seat, that the blessing she had so long sought was to reach her that day, and she was almost startled when, in the midst of the reading, some one asked the very question that had so long been sounding and resounding in her heart—How does the sinner become a child of God?

The answer was given in the words of Galatians iii. 26, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

It was a simple word, but it was the incorruptible seed, the living, life-giving word of God; and it was God's message to Louie; His message to her at that moment. It was a solemn moment. Would she hear the word, would she cast away every other thought, every other trust; would she own that the word, the simple word, without help of man, the word she had so long known and heard, was all that was needed, God's instrument to bring her from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God? The Lord Himself graciously opened Louie's heart; He presented Himself before her as the one Saviour, the only Saviour, the all-sufficient Saviour, the Saviour sent of the Father, who had borne all the punishment due for her many sins, whose precious blood cleansed from all sin. Louie believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, she received the word, she received Him whom that word presented, and, like a river, all that she had ever longed for of safety, certainty, peace, love and joy flowed into her empty, needy, thirsty soul. All, yes all, her desires met, all her hopes and longings realised, and far, far more, for it enters not into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God reveals them to His own children by His Spirit. Louie now knew God, the God whom she had so ignorantly sought after, as her Father; she could cry, Abba Father, she knew the Lord Jesus Christ, that Jesus of whom she had so often sadly read and sung, as her Saviour, her own Saviour. It was bright light indeed, shining without shadow, even "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

How real Louie's Bible became to her now! The precious blood of Christ was precious to her now. The Name of Jesus was above every Name to her now. The love of God was sweet to her now, and it was shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost which was given to her. She was no longer a lonely traveller along the dreary road of time, death and judgment; no more a stranger, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God; begotten of Him, she loved, with a fresh, sweet, strong love those that were His.

Have you, dear reader, simply received the word of God? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you the same blessed portion that Louie found?

"The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

"How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the

shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures."

"Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee; if I would declare and speak of them they are more than can be numbered."

"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them; if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand of the sea."

He is coming! Who is coming?
Is it one whom I shall fear?
Not if I by faith have known Him
As the One who suffered here;
As the One who loved me, gave me
All that Love divine could give,
As the One who died to save me,
Me the lost, that I might live.

He is coming! Even Jesus, He who once in perfect grace, Spotless Lamb of God's ordaining, Took the guilty sinner's place; Drank the cup of wrath o'erwhelming, With His blood the ransom paid, Sin's dread punishment enduring, For our souls atonement made.

He is coming! Even Jesus,
He, the Saviour glorified,
Faithful in His love, will gather
To Himself His ransom'd Bride.
"Caught up" in that wondrous "moment,"
Raised by voice and power divine,
They who now by faith behold Him
In His likeness then shall shine.

He is coming! Even Jesus,
Who once here in lowly grace,
Was the weary outcast stranger,
Soon will claim His rightful place.
He, the Christ of God, appointed
Heir of all things, comes to reign;
Judgment clears the way before Him;
All must own His title then.

He is coming! Who is ready For the brightness of that day? Only they who, to Him coming, Get their sins now washed away. They shall hear His voice, and rising Glorified, with Him shall be, When, a careless world surprising, He comes forth to victory.

He is coming! quickly coming!
Oh! will any yet delay?
What if that blest coming find them
Unprepared by Mercy's day?
Then the brightness of His coming
Shall their every hope destroy;
Endless anguish all their portion
In the day of cloudless joy.

He is coming! Who is coming? Christ, the Saviour, Son of Man, Executing in perfection, God the Father's wondrous plan. Son of God, Jehovah, Jesus, Son of David, Salem's King, Joy of Heaven, and Earth's Redeemer Heaven and earth Thy praise shall sing.



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