



ALICE SHAW AND HELEN GORDON

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AND

ELLEN GORDON.



TORONTO AND MONTREAL:  
JAMES CAMPBELL AND SON.



ALICE SHAW AND ELLEN GORDON:  
OR, THE  
YOUNG COMMUNICANTS.

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PERHAPS some one who opens these pages may have read a little book called "THE BABY'S BAPTISM," and may remember that Alice Shaw, the eldest daughter of the family, was awakened to many serious thoughts on witnessing her little brother receive that holy ordinance, and observing the devotion of her pious parents on the occasion. If it should be so, possibly my young reader may find some interest in hearing more of Alice. The convictions then awakened in her mind continued unabated for some weeks. She daily read the Bible with earnest attention, and to reading she joined prayer, offered in the name of Jesus Christ for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. She was sensible a change had taken place in her mind and feelings, and she

fervently hoped it would be permanent. She expressed this hope only to the friend of her childhood, Bell Downie, a girl of her own age, daughter of George Downie, whom we have already introduced to our readers in "THE BABY'S BAPTISM;" but while Alice expressed herself in the language of hope, few doubts troubled her peace of mind, and she supposed religion had obtained a much firmer footing in her soul, and that the principle of corruption within her had been much more subdued, than was really the case. Alice could not be truly thankful to God for her present devout feelings, because she was ignorant of the extent of human corruption, and had yet to learn to distinguish between the solid peace of faith in Christ Jesus, and her present new and uninformed feelings of devotion.

Should any of my young readers have passed through some of this experience, they will not be astonished to learn, that Alice in some months read her Bible with less interest—that secret prayer was sometimes omitted—that objects of a worldly nature resumed their influence over her mind, deadening its spirituality, and rendering her less watchful against temptation, and less sensible of its power.

To these symptoms of rapid declension, as well as to the symptoms of spiritual life that Alice had felt, Thomas Shaw was a stranger. Tenderly as he loved this child, carefully as he trained her in the ways of godliness, and lively as was the satisfaction with which he marked the increasing attention with which she listened, while he read the word of God at home, or she heard it preached at church, he feared to induce young people to express more than they really felt, and thus to deceive themselves. All Thomas could do, was to press, with the earnestness of a Christian, on her and his other children, the infinite importance of eternal things.

In this fluctuating state, at one time rather more attentive to sacred duties, at another only led to them by the fear of God, or the reproaches of her own conscience, but in fact totally destitute of that holy, watchful, life-giving spirit, that must animate the Christian in his warfare, ere he can advance in holiness, peace, and joy, Alice had passed the years between fifteen and seventeen. Little William was now two years old, and very much the charge of Alice, who loved him with the tenderest affection, listening to his amusing attempts at speaking, and who

devoted herself to him in a way that met a return of affection from Willy she was very sensible of. He carried all his complaints to her, and looked to Alice for redress under every grievance. If little Mary or Christie offended him in any way, he would carry his complaints to his sister, and make her sensible of the extent of his wrongs, long before he could clothe these complaints in language. Mrs Shaw often took the part of the elder children, and Alice was very generally accused of being too partial to Willy in her decisions, while the little independent fellow soon learned to play his sisters a sly trick, and then run and hide his rosy face in the lap of Alice, or mounted on her knee to consider himself safe from their tiny vengeance.

After a few days of severe illness and suffering, poor Alice saw this little favourite laid low. She had watched till nature was tired; and just as the sun arose in the full splendour of a summer's morning, Willy closed his short span of life. All around bore the bright, the glad impress of a new day; but Thomas Shaw's humble cottage was the scene of pain and sorrow. This child, so lately the life and amusement of every one, lay, as a flower of the field, cut down ere it is blown. Alice could have supposed him

fallen asleep, while she saw the calm that succeeded his restless tossings; but as she gazed on that still sleep, an awe stole over her spirits, and a fear chilled her heart. She spoke not—she wept not—and she feared to move, till her father, after conducting his weeping wife into the next room, covered the child's face with the sheet; and said in a suppressed tone of voice, "Alice, he was the Lord's. He will not return to us, but I trust we shall *all* go to him." Still Alice moved not; but when her father spoke gently to her, and made her follow him to her mother, and quit the bedside of the little dead child, then poor Alice's tears flowed, and she mourned and sorrowed for the little companion she had loved so well.

After some days spent in all the agony of youthful grief, Alice was struck with the composure of her parents, particularly that of her father. He still grew pale as he returned in the evening to the home circle, where (though all his children claimed his notice) Willy, as the youngest, was always placed on his knee, and she saw the big tear often roll down his manly cheek when any of the child's things met his eye, or when the little ones spoke of him; but he bore calmly and submissively the stroke



that made his heart ache ; and Alice was astonished with the language of his prayers: they not only breathed an entire submission and confiding trust in the God that had thus afflicted him and his family, but they also breathed a heart-searching humility. Thomas Shaw seemed, to his daughter, to be more than usually employed in searching and trying his ways, and in imploring God to search and try him.

Alice felt a fear of God in this day of distress ; but these observations on her father's very different state of feelings made her turn her eyes inward upon her own heart, and she thought, " If sin, actual sin, had thus called forth the judgments of God, and been the cause of the slaying of their youngest darling, that sin was surely hers, who, in the midst of so many advantages, remained halting between two opinions : at one time, coldly serving the Lord, at another, nearly forsaking those means of grace, the value of which she had been so carefully taught." This idea sunk deep into the soul of Alice ; fixed there by the Spirit of God, who now convinced her of sin, opening her eyes to see it in some degree in its nature and defilement, and teaching her to seek the only remedy against its power and punishment in the aton-

ing blood of Christ. Alice was too well instructed not to know the plan of salvation, and that through Christ Jesus there is mercy for the very chief of sinners; but she had yet to learn that, till the Spirit speaks peace to the troubled soul—till the sinner is enabled to accept the offers of mercy in Christ, the best instructions, and the best taught lessons, are but as “water spilt upon the ground.” Alice remained troubled and under a sense of sin, but careful in the discharge of known duty. Her parents took no notice of the sadness that sat on her countenance, or of her withdrawing from the society of others, for they supposed her still feeling the loss of her cheerful little companion, and they deemed such sorrow most natural. Even Bell Downie was ignorant of much that passed in the mind of her friend. Her joys she had been freely permitted to share; but there is something in the very nature of spiritual sorrow that leads to reserve, and shuts the heart from others. Alice felt that no human friend could lighten the disquietude of her soul, and she desired to hide the workings of her mind, even from that friend who had been the participant of her more happy feelings.

Some months after the death of little William Shaw, Mr Methven, the minister of the parish of Glenhuily, having one Sabbath closed the service, intimated from the pulpit, that he requested all the young persons, who wished to communicate for the first time at the approaching sacrament, to give in their names, and attend one evening of every week at his house, till that ordinance should be administered three months after that period.

Alice and Bell Downie left the church full of thought. Bell had already mentioned to her friend her desire of being admitted as a communicant, and that her father (though himself a Baptist) made no objection to her joining Mr Methven's church; but to this confidence Alice made no return, though much passed in her mind. Now she felt her minister's address oblige her to come to some decision. In much perplexity she determined to speak to her father that evening, and she chid herself for the extreme embarrassment she felt at the thought of doing so. Much of this embarrassment Thomas Shaw spared his daughter by entering into the following dialogue with her that evening, after the other young people were gone to rest.

THOMAS. "My dear Alice, do you under-

stand the nature of the Lord's Supper; and have you ever considered the obligation Christians are under to obey the dying command of their Lord?"

ALICE. "Father, I have thought of it, and shall be much obliged if you will instruct me, —if you will assist me, I have wished to make this request."

THOMAS. "And with pleasure I will comply with it, my dear child, hoping one day to see you a partaker of this holy ordinance."

Thomas paused and looked at his daughter as if he expected an answer. Alice's eyes filled with tears. Most thankfully would she have opened her heart to this kind parent; but her mother was present: she knew not where to begin, or what to say; her heart was full, and she remained silent.

Thomas, after a moment's pause, and, without appearing to remark his daughter's emotion opened the Bible that lay near him, and read in the Gospel of St Mark, xiv. 22-25, the institution of the Lord's Supper, "The same night in which He was betrayed;" then added, "You, I believe, know that the term sacrament is taken from the oath which the Roman soldiers took to be faithful and true to their general—not to desert

his standard either in the hour of temptation or danger. A Christian is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in sitting down at the sacramental table he comes under the same engagements. He must, therefore, possess knowledge enough to understand what is implied in being Christ's, and a desire to follow Him through good report and evil report. This ordinance is also called the Eucharist, which means giving of thanks; and every account of our Lord's instituting this sacrament tells us He did so on the occasion. Now, Alice, having given you the meaning of the names used, do you understand the meaning of 'the sacraments becoming the effectual means of salvation to them who, by faith, receive them, and that, without any virtue in the sacraments themselves, or in those who administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them?' You know that one of the many errors held by the Roman Catholics is, that there is a virtue in the outward form itself, and that the priest may confer or withhold this benefit; you are, I hope, too well instructed to believe any thing so entirely contrary to Scripture, which says, that faith in Christ Jesus can alone save us, or enable us to

derive benefit from any outward duty. Let us, therefore, leave these errors, and simply inquire what is represented to us in this sacrament, and how these means of grace promote and advance our sanctification, and by the blessing of God carry on the work of grace in our souls, enabling us to go on from strength to strength. The outward emblems are bread and wine. What do they represent to us?"

Alice replied that they represented the body of our Lord broken for us, and the blood of Christ shed for us.

THOMAS. "Yes, Alice; these emblems, when used in that holy ordinance, signify and recall the great sacrifice that has been made for us. Christ, as head of the church, had power and authority to institute this ordinance; we, therefore, in obeying it, rest upon the divine command; and we may and ought to look with firm faith for the promised blessing to our souls. Let us now more fully inquire into what is there signified. Do you remember the state of the children of Israel at the time the Passover was instituted?"

ALICE. "They were in bondage—captivity—ordered to make brick without straw—they saw no means of deliverance."

THOMAS. "And to them Moses was sent. He wrought many miracles, and, by these signs of divine power, tended to confirm the hope in the minds of the children of Israel, that in him God had sent them a deliverer—for the plagues fell only on Pharaoh and his people. The Israelites were preserved from all harm. When the long-suffering patience of God was drawing to a close, and Pharaoh was to be left to his hardness of heart, Moses was commanded to instruct the children of Israel how to keep the Passover. They were to do it according to the direction they received in all respects. They were neither to add any of their own inventions, nor to omit any part of the commanded duty. Can you, my dear Alice, tell me in what the lamb slain was a type of our Saviour?"

ALICE. "It was to be a lamb without spot or blemish, to denote that the Saviour sacrificed for us 'was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' It was to be slain, and Christ was crucified for us; but, father, I neither understand why it was to be roasted with fire, nor why *all* the children of Israel were commanded to partake of it, for we are told that many of them were sinners—unbelievers."

THOMAS. "The roasting the lamb with fire,

was emblematic of the intense and severe sufferings of the true Paschal Lamb. With regard to your second difficulty, Alice, you must remember that a person not being in a state of mind to obey a commanded duty with sincerity of heart, is no exemption from the obligation. The inability is a *moral* one, and proceeds from a state of sin, and a refusal to comply with the means of moral health and restoration offered to *all* in Christ."

Alice's rosy cheek became pale, as her father thus seriously addressed her; but she spoke not, and a pause of a few moments ensued, interrupted by Mrs Shaw, saying, "That the children of Israel appeared to her in rather a different situation from Christians of the present day. That they were a separate people, and that, as a nation, many special deliverances were afforded them, to mark the power and government of the true God. That though no spiritual good to their souls could flow from an insincere and unfaithful celebration of the Passover, yet the outward sign in that institution, of the blood on the lintel and side-posts of the door, saved every Israelite from the judgment inflicted on the first-born of those not so defended."

Thomas agreed in this opinion, but at the



same time reminded his wife, that in this land also many blessings, the acknowledged fruit of Christianity, rested on the dwellings of those who did not worship God in spirit and in truth, and who had not accepted of the Lord Jesus as all their salvation. Thomas then asked Alice if she understood what the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the lintels, and on the side-posts of the door, meant, and if she remembered from what it saved them ?

ALICE. "The blood of the lamb slain at the Passover, was a type of our Saviour's blood shed for sinners ; and as every house was safe from the destroying angel's power, on which that blood was sprinkled, so every soul is safe who is washed in the blood of Christ, and at the day of judgment they shall stand on the right hand of God, as the redeemed of the Lord—the purchase of Christ's atonement."

THOMAS. "Now think for a moment, Alice, of that dread night in the land of Egypt, when in every house, from that of the king upon the throne, to that of the slave in the dungeon, there lay a dead body. We are told 'there was a great cry in the land ;' but among the chosen people, among those sheltered by the blood of the lamb, there was not a hair of one of their

heads hurt : in the midst of this overwhelming judgment they stood safe. You will then form some faint idea of the value of that blood of which this was only a faint emblem, or shadow. That blessed atonement has been made. The true lamb has been offered and accepted by God the Father. All the blessings connected with it, and the covering security of that peace-speaking blood, are now freely offered to all who, in the appointed way, seek it. For them, dear Alice, though the weakest, the feeblest of the flock of Christ, is this ordinance of the Lord's Supper intended and prepared. There, with a consciousness of sin, both original and actual, and by the help of a simple but lively faith, they may look to Him who said, 'If ye seek me, let these go free;' then gave his own body to be broken, and his own blood to be shed, that they might escape the condemnation. To you, my child, is this salvation offered."

Thomas paused, seemingly waiting for his daughter's reply. Mrs Shaw looked at Alice, then rose saying, that she must go to the children, and would not return.

When left alone with her father, Alice said, in a timid, agitated tone of voice, "Father, I am not worthy to attend at this holy ordinance."

THOMAS. "And who is worthy, Alice? We must consult Scripture, to ascertain what is the preparation of heart required before we can attend acceptably. In that I will assist you to the utmost of my power; then the matter must remain between God and your own soul. I am not to appear at the judgment-seat of Christ for you; you must there stand for yourself, and there hear the sentence of your Judge. Those fears that arise from ignorance only, I may hope to assist you to see the error of. You do not, Alice, doubt that you are a sinner both in practice and by nature—that you have forfeited the favour of God?"

ALICE. "This I most sincerely believe."

THOMAS. "Well then, you require not only to have this habitual knowledge of the sinfulness of your own heart, but you must study also, by self-examination and by prayer, to have this feeling of self-abasement in exercise at the time you approach the Lord's table, that you may obtain the blessing promised to those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.' You must also have knowledge to understand how Christ is offered to you, a sinner, and faith to accept of his righteousness and atonement as all your salvation. Consciousness of sin will

alone make you come as a sin-sick soul to your heavenly Physician ; and this faith and knowledge will impart the confidence that He will and can accept you, and apply the remedy to the good of your soul. Do you understand me, Alice ?”

ALICE. “ Oh yes, father. If——”

THOMAS. “ So prepared, my child, you will find that the bread and the wine put into your hands, though in themselves so simple, are to you as the seal of your right to an interest in Christ, and all the benefits of his death and resurrection. They will no longer be merely a figure of good to you, but by the powerful aid of the Spirit become real spiritual nourishment to your soul. And may you, my dear Alice (added Thomas, lifting his eyes to heaven, with an expression of devout confidence), feel the blessing follow, in more enlarged desires after the knowledge of God—more firm faith that works by love, crucifying the world unto you, and you unto the world.”

ALICE. “ Oh father, stop ! your hopes of me are not just ; you know not the coldness, deadness, and unsteadiness of my heart.”

THOMAS. “ And if you desire to have that coldness and unsteadiness removed, where can

you place your hopes of their being so, more justly than in a service where the aggravated nature of sin is shown you, together with the love of God the Father, who sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should be saved; and the love of the Son, who took our nature into union with his divine nature, that by 'his stripes we should be healed.' Is it not by faith in this love that our hearts can alone be softened? Though you, Alice, may at present only be able to look to this Saviour afar off, that look is faith, and though the seed is small, wait upon God in the use of appointed means, and it shall increase."

ALICE. "But I do not always desire to obey God, or to live as a Christian."

THOMAS. "Sin dwells in our hearts; and if God, by his Spirit, has convinced you of this sad truth, and made you desire to renounce it, you must also receive power from God to enable you to do so. You cannot of yourself think a good thought."

Alice burst into tears, her ideas were confused, she could but in part understand her father's meaning. Could he have read the inmost thought of her heart, she would have been thankful; but she knew not what to say, and

oppressed by feelings of awe and doubt, her tears flowed.

Thomas Shaw did not press his daughter any farther ; but when he saw her more composed, he asked her whether they should use the appointed means and seek together the guidance of God to enlighten them ; then kneeling down with his child, he poured forth the desires of his soul for the increase of her faith and light. .

Alice's mind was calmed and encouraged by this prayer, and her hope animated. When she rose from her knees, she expressed the wish that her father should give in her name to Mr Methven. She added, that she would at least like to receive his instructions, though God only could see her heart.

Thomas Shaw promised to do so, and then blessing his daughter, sent her to rest with a heart hardly less softened and overcome than her own. He felt it is a solemn and an anxious period of a parent's life when he first sees his child desire to devote herself to the Lord.

Alice's name was next day placed on Mr Methven's list—and she, with her friend Bell Downie, attended regularly together, with several other young persons. Bell, truly happy

to have her friend with her, spoke to her with the utmost openness. She felt the earnest desire to devote herself to the Lord; and her mind was perplexed by none of those fears and anxieties that filled the heart of Alice. She was in an humble, earnest, happy frame of spirit, and the silence and dejection of her friend was the greatest grief she then knew.

Mr Methven was pleased with the degree of information which he found the two young people possess. He knew the character of their parents, and spoke to them with the utmost seriousness of the advantages with which they were blessed—recalled to them, that “to whom much is given, much will be required,” and admonished them seriously of the danger of self-deception, and of mistaking knowledge for real piety, and the good habits in which they had been trained for regeneration. He dwelt upon some of the difficulties of being a Christian, and maintaining a consistent conduct after publicly taking upon one’s-self the character of a follower of Christ. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven,” said Mr Methven, earnestly. “You must take up your cross daily and follow

Christ—follow Him ‘without the camp, bearing his reproach.’”

Even Bell’s heart trembled under his faithful and solemn admonition, and she received her token of admission with a trembling hand and a tearful eye ; but, as he kindly bid them adieu, praying that the Lord would bless and guide them, she felt her hope revive.

Not so Alice. She accepted her token, but she did so with the fixed determination of not attending, unless her own mind was more satisfied that she was in a fit state to do so without sin, or rather without adding sin to sin ; for of her sinfulness she had no doubt, or of the power and willingness of her Saviour to save those who in sincerity sought it ; but Alice doubted her own sincerity. She did desire to attend at this holy ordinance, but she felt in herself a love of sin, and was sensible of a frequent indulgence in it that she considered inconsistent with being a real Christian. She had listened to Mr Methven’s instructions with deep interest. She had heard all her father said, but she felt how very little they could know of her heart. It was with an all-seeing God, who will not be mocked, that she had to do.

On the morning of the day appointed by the



church for fasting and humiliation, previous to the Lord's Supper, Alice told her father her determination.

Thomas was surprised and distressed. He endeavoured to convince his daughter that while she thought she was simply trusting in Christ, she was in fact looking to her own power for that preparation of heart she desired ; but when he saw that she could not enter into the meaning of what he said to her, he desisted, remembering that God alone can open the heart to believe, and impart the light that guides the darkened soul. He felt for this dear child's pain, but trusted, that though at present the Spirit was only convincing her of sin, and rendering that sin bitter to her, the time would come when she would see all her sins laid upon the head of her great High Priest, and be enabled to take the cup of salvation in simple faith and joyful hope. Thomas Shaw said so to his daughter, who only answered him with a look of sadness that touched his heart ; but when he encouraged her to act sincerely according to the dictates of her own conscience, treating her with all the gentle tenderness her state of mind required ; when he spoke encouragingly, and dwelt on the efficacy of prayer, recalling some of the many

promises made to it, and some of the instances of its having prevailed with God, that are recorded in Scripture, then Alice listened with something like a confiding hope.

Alice attended in church during every day's service. She felt as one excluded from the blessings others enjoyed. When she saw her dear father, mother, and friend, seated at the table of the Lord; when she saw the symbols of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood put into their hands; when she heard the warm and animated exhortation addressed to them, now to offer their supplications to the Lord, now to open the desires of their souls to the Saviour, whose dying love they were commemorating; when she thought of the security of those who had this Saviour for their friend, and felt herself excluded, she retired to the corner of her seat, shed many bitter tears, and was disposed to fear she had excluded herself; for the servant of the Lord had already placed her name among the members of the church—her father had spoken encouragingly to her. The next moment she looked at her own heart for sincerity in her engagements to be the Lord's, and was truly thankful that she had not presumptuously taken encouragement that did not belong to her, and

numbered herself among the followers of Christ Jesus.

Deeply dejected in mind, Alice left the house of God ; yet that day had not been without improvement. Many things she had heard, came accompanied by the light of the Spirit, and both dispelled some of her darkness and shed a faint hope in her soul. She was a bruised reed, and the compassionate Saviour did not break the heart whose present feeble desires were directed towards Him.

Alice's mind was in some degree disturbed with the apprehension that she would be questioned by others. She blamed herself for this fear of man, and it tended to show her how little she felt it a small thing to be judged of man's judgment ; but her father had studied the character of his daughter, and prevented any distressing inquiries being put to her. He had also deeply studied the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart, and feared to poison the present sincerity of his child's mind, by making her too much an object of attention, or to mislead her by disposing her to trust to man's aid, instead of the promised influences of the Spirit to assist and accompany her own endeavours.

It had long been determined that Alice should

spend some time in the neighbouring town, with Mrs Gordon, a relation of her mother's, to receive those instructions in several branches of female work, that neither the village of Glenhuilly nor her mother were able to supply. Delay after delay had taken place in carrying into effect a plan that was to part Alice from her father and mother. Now, however, Mrs Gordon, and several other friends, urged the propriety of it with so much earnestness, that it was determined she should go. Alice, placed in the midst of every spiritual advantage, and under means of holy instruction, which many less fortunately situated would have envied, was still so much a prey to doubts, and dark and uncertain feelings, that her naturally gay spirits were gone, and her heart in a great measure indifferent to every thing around her. The importance of eternal things weighed her down, and she experienced some of the bitterness of a "wounded spirit;" and, in every after grief of her life, felt that no other sorrow can be compared with the restless misery of that sorrow which Scripture emphatically asks, "Who can bear?" In this state of mind, she heard, with comparative indifference, the often repeated advice to her mother to send her to Mrs Gordon, and the praises bestowed

upon her by many. She was, they said, a most meritorious person. Though left a widow early in life with the charge of a large family, she had never sunk under difficulty, but brought up her children remarkably well. One neighbour added, that Mrs Gordon's was the kind of piety she liked, that it fitted herself and her children both for this world and the next; her's was the useful religion. Alice perceived the smile that sat on her father's lips, and the colour that heightened in her mother's countenance when this observation was made, and felt curious to know her father's opinion of Mrs Gordon's religion, as she had never heard her mentioned by him as eminent for piety.

After many kind injunctions from Thomas Shaw to let him know if she was not happy, and promises, that if she was not so, he would come himself and fetch her home, and many sorrowful adieus on both sides, Alice set out on a fine autumn day. The sadness of the season, of the falling leaves, and the near approach of the dreary winter, suited her state of feeling, and, with regret, she perceived the rising smoke of the town of B— before her, and soon afterwards found herself in the habitation of Mrs Gordon, and welcomed by her oldest son

and daughter, Willy and Ellen Gordon, who had formerly been her companions and playmates, as Mr Gordon, their father, had lived near Thomas Shaw, during the latter years of his life. They soon conducted her to their mother, and the other members of the family, some of them still as young as her own little brothers and sisters.

Mrs Gordon welcomed Alice with many expressions of kindness, and she, on her part, felt happy to see her young friends. After some hours spent in her house, however, Alice felt Mrs Gordon, seated in her arm-chair at her knitting, rather a restraint upon her. There was a want of cordiality about her, and her expressions of pleasure and satisfaction at the sight of her, and her many questions about the welfare of every member of the family, did not convey the same kindness she had been accustomed to in her father's cottage, where no one expressed more than they felt. Alice's susceptible feelings quickly became aware that there was a difference, though she could not have made another understand in what it consisted ; but her own spirits and manners bore the impression of it, and she became silent and uncomfortable.

Mrs Gordon, in a short time, told her daugh-

ter, Ellen, to prepare the tea, for that her friends would be coming soon. Ellen answered, "Oh mother, not for an hour and a half; let me stay with Alice a little; then I will do it so quickly, you will see all will be ready long before they come."

Mrs Gordon knit her brows, and replied, "Ellen, do what I desire you—duty must always come before pleasure."

Ellen rose in evident ill humour, and obeyed her mother, while Willy gave a smack with his mouth, and a wink, to Alice, that surprised and annoyed her. She felt all was not right, and becoming every moment more uneasy, she feared to open her lips, or to begin any subject, lest she should again see the family in discord.

Several of Mrs Gordon's friends came to drink tea with her, and the scene was so new to Alice, that she had abundant occupation for one evening, in listening to the conversation of the party. The character of one of the ministers of the town was first discussed. "I really like his preaching," said an old woman with a sharp face, "he so plainly tells me my duty—what I am to do, and what I am not to do—without perplexing me with any of the dark mysterious doctrines some preachers in this place bring into their discourses; and he de-

sires us to examine ourselves by our works," added she, stroking her well-starched handkerchief, and looking pleased. "He is not satisfied with bidding you think of your faith, as some others do," added the speaker, casting a glance at Alice.

Alice, however, had only lived in her father's peaceful cottage. She had only heard his humble kind of piety, and she did not understand that glance as directed to her, or yet know that she was supposed to be brought up in a way of thinking that tended to the neglect of St Paul's admonition, "That all they which believe in God, should be careful to maintain good works."

A fat elderly man, after swallowing a very large mouthful of bread and butter, replied to this speaker, "And whose works praise them as Mr Moir's do? How charitable he is in his opinion of others, and how carefully he attended to the soup-kitchen last winter. Not a day did you miss his honest face walking up and down in the room where it was distributed; and, after all, the ungrateful poor do not like him, and flock in crowds to hear Mr Lindsay, though, I am sure, not one word of his mysterious sermons can they understand."



MRS GORDON. "And he teaches young people to disobey their parents. How any man can suppose himself right in occasioning family differences, I cannot imagine, with the Bible in his hands, where the command of honouring father and mother stands so strongly enforced. Nevertheless, I am told it is entirely in consequence of Mr Lindsay's preaching, that such disorders have arisen in the family of our poor friend, Mr Bonner. And, to see his looks of anxiety, and the silent down-cast air of the young people as he marches them to Mr Moir's church every Sabbath-day, really makes my heart ache, and fills me with indignation at the man who has thus set the parent and children at variance with each other. What a sweet family they used to be that year we so often went, all together, to the plays that were acted here for some weeks—so cheerful, so innocent like. Now I take good care my young people should have nothing to do with them, or ever hear their vile deluder."

"Often we have heard him, though, my good mother," whispered Willy Gordon to Alice, as he sat next her. Alice looked at him with unfeigned surprise, and poor Ellen, reading that look through the tears that had gathered in her

eyes at the recollection of her former beloved friends, the Bonners, replied to Alice's look, by saying, "I did not suppose you, Alice, would think hearing a strict preacher wrong. When your father was last here, he went nowhere else."

ALICE. "But if your mother disapproves?"

WILLY. "My mother thinks no one is ever to have a will but herself. We must take our own way."

Alice felt shocked and surprised. She thought that no Mr Lindsay was here required to sow discord—it seemed to reign in abundance in the hearts of the different members of the family; though the surface, to the eye of a stranger, was smooth, and no open dissent from their mother's way of thinking was ever expressed.

The evening passed on in much the same style: the characters of many surrounding friends and neighbours were discussed; and surely the company did not possess the charity upon which they had complimented Mr Moir, for Alice withdrew to her room for the night, worn out and tired, thinking she had never before heard so many ill-natured stories, or seen so little love reign among relations. She felt frightened at the prospect of passing some months in such a family. Her thoughts rested with feelings

of pity on Ellen (who was evidently afraid of her mother) for some time, then wandered to the peaceful happy home with which she was blessed, and she fell asleep thinking of, and praying for, the dear domestic circle, who loved, not only in words, but in heart and in truth.

In a few days Alice became better informed with regard to the different characters and ways of thinking of Mrs Gordon and her family. She saw that, in a form of religion, and a daily round of devotional duties, Mrs Gordon was most regular herself, and that she compelled the same observance in her children ; but it was indeed only the form. No sooner was the book closed, or the prayer ended, than Mrs Gordon's naturally severe temper, or her worldly spirit, manifested itself with as unsubdued force, as if she had never opened the gospel of peace, or never read the divine commandment, to seek first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness of Christ.

Ellen and Willy were wearied of their mother governing them, with as little regard to their different tastes and characters as she had done when they were two years old ; and having sense enough to see the little influence her religion had over her mind or conduct, they

utterly despised it, and only listened in silence to any thing she said on the subject, to avoid the long lecture which followed the expression of any opinion different from that of their mother.

Willy, finding Mrs Gordon unable to render a reason for the faith she professed, or the observances she submitted to, and irritated by his doubts (even when they were proposed in simplicity) being treated as proofs of impiety, was fast advancing into the fatal error of supposing, that because his mother's nominal religion was neither founded on knowledge, nor attended with any amelioration of heart and life, there was, therefore, no truth in the religion of the gospel.

Ellen, with a more timid spirit, took a different course. She felt the dictates of natural religion leading her to believe in the reward of good, and the punishment of evil, while her conscience, darkened as it was, often condemned her. She therefore did believe in a Being she feared, but that Being was certainly not the God of the Bible. Both Willy and his sister had heard Mr Lindsay preach, but their desire to do so merely proceeded from curiosity, excited by the report others gave them, and from their tempers being irritated by the prejudice Mrs Gordon expressed against a man she had never heard.

In this miserable state of things, Alice Sh joined this family, with a mind labouring un a sense of sin, and still fearful of approach the Saviour she loved, and had been taught think of as altogether lovely, and that in I there is life, and peace, and joy.

From Ellen, and even from Willy, she s gathered enough to show her a state of feel and opinion so entirely different from that her father's house, that Alice at first felt wildered and confused ; but she roused her from this state of amazement and uncertai and recollected that she had the revelatio God in her hands. That if there was any t in the offers of mercy made to man thro Christ, any truth in the promise of the F Spirit to lead inquiring souls "into all tru these offers were made to her, and that she stood in a situation where, if she too appea to doubt, if she professed a religion so un tain as she had hitherto done, she was confi ging one young friend in his dangerous see cism, and the other in all her present error opinions of a God of mercy and truth.

Alice had mistaken doubt and distrust humility, when in the enjoyment of all the vileges and blessings with which she was

rounded in her father's house. She from day to day, had yielded to their influence without any vigorous effort to obtain a firm footing on the Rock of Ages; but, now that all around her was so changed, so new, so full of pain, Alice's mind was led to feel the importance of her situation, and with an earnestness hitherto unknown to her, to examine her doubts and fears, with the desire to obtain a victory over them, that she might not, in this house of delusion, make the name of Christ be evil spoken of.

The two young Gordons, habituated to the restraint of their mother's mode of education, were delighted with the free converse and interchange of opinion that Alice, as a matter of course, entered into. Willy generally accosted her the moment the door closed on his mother, with "Now, Alice, let us have a little argument; I never get angry with you, however much we may differ in opinion."

ALICE. "And I could bear your anger with more ease than I do your differing with me on a matter so important to yourself."

WILLY. "Then convince me, my fair Alice, by your arguments; I do not assent to any thing but truth."

ALICE. "I do not wish you to do so, Willy;

but all the conversation you have yet held with me, though on serious subjects, is only, I fear, from a love of discussion, and not from a real consideration of the subject; and that is not the way to arrive at truth."

WILLY. "That is most unfair to lay your want of success upon me instead of yourself; that is really arguing *against* me."

Thus Willy always loved to get Alice into conversation, and though these conversations were not at the time attended with any permanent advantage to Willy Gordon, Alice felt that, as she conversed of the divine nature of our Lord and Saviour; as she quoted the strongest passages of Scripture in proof of his being one with God, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" while she recalled to him the evidence of our Lord's miracles—the power of prophecy He possessed,—and the wonderful fulfilling of predictions, apparently so contradictory, *in Him* who became an Infant of days; while she dwelt on his raising the dead at the last day; his appearing as the Judge of all—though Alice was only bring-

ing forward the information that had with much tender care been given her, she felt her own faith strengthened, she felt ashamed in the sight of God of many of the doubts that had at times floated through her head, and been permitted to remain in undefined confusion. Some of the passages of Scripture which she quoted to Willy came home to her own heart with a power that surprised her ; and her thoughts at times rising above herself, her doubts and fears lost themselves in contemplating the mighty plan of man's redemption. In these short moments, when Alice Shaw could rise above herself, her faith was greatly strengthened, and her fear almost dispelled that she had herself no present interest in this salvation. They came accompanied with so many thoughts of the goodness, the mercy, and the faithfulness of that God who changeth not, that her heart was lightened, and she felt animated to press forward in the knowledge of God, "whom to know is life eternal."

And when the timid Ellen Gordon expressed her ideas, and Alice, in all the fervour of compassion and sympathy, endeavoured to show her how erroneous her ideas of the character of God were ; when she pled with her the love of a Saviour ; the tender character He assumed as



a Shepherd, one who "shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young;" she wondered where her own fears were fled. She urged another, with the most confiding trust, to accept the offers of salvation; that salvation, she said, wrought out by "God when He purchased the church with his own blood," and offered to us "without money and without price." She urged that, if Ellen felt she was a sinner, then she had a right to lay hold of what was expressly offered to sinners—that, if she felt she was blind, she might come to Him who could alone anoint her eyes with eye-salve, that she might see. Often, after Alice returned, from time so spent, to the solitude of her own room, the question would force itself upon her, Whether it were possible that her heart was still entirely devoid of love to that Saviour she so earnestly desired to recommend to others. What joy would she experience if she saw either Ellen or Willy Gordon inquiring "what they must do to be saved." Could that feeling glow warmly in a heart still quite dead to the love of God? She hoped not; and that hope gave renewed life to the very love from which it flowed.

Time passed on without any material change

in the outward circumstances of the family. Alice was diligent in acquiring the instruction for which she had been placed in Mrs Gordon's family. She had, in truth, daily less inducement to withdraw her attention from these occupations, for she daily felt more strongly that there is a separation of heart and feeling between those who "worship God in spirit and in truth," and those who only approach Him with the lips, while the heart is far from Him. She did not avoid any intercourse with either of her young friends, when her other occupations permitted her; but they now avoided her, or rather insensibly parted from her. After Willy had argued till all novelty was at an end, and till the interest which had at first been excited by religion, so newly and so warmly presented to him, had died away, he preferred the society of those more similar to him in taste and feeling; while Ellen's mind, deadened by injudicious restraint, had given itself up to trifles, and she could not rouse herself enough to follow the more healthy and vigorous mind of Alice, even in pursuits of a worldly nature.

Poor Alice's mind used to sicken at the scene often presented to her on a Sabbath evening, when Mrs Gordon compelled her children to

listen to a long sermon read as a mere task ; then saw the book closed with the evident feelings that the self-righteous service had been accomplished—that it had applied balm to the deceived soul, though not one act of faith in Christ—not one look to Him for the covering righteousness required to shield her from the justice of God—not one feeling of want of strength, or desire after holiness, had been excited by this outward form ; from it she returned to her own thoughts, and to her earth-born desires, as completely as if the form of devotion had never been complied with. Alice, after witnessing this scene one evening, was drawing the contrast between it and a Sabbath at her father's, in her own mind, when Willy gave a long yawn, and declared *that* was the longest sermon he had ever heard ; and little Mary Gordon moving close to her, and placing herself on her knee, whispered, "I don't love Sunday ; every one is cross but you, Alice."

Alice pressed the child to her heart, and was going to reply to this observation, when Mrs Gordon sent the child to bed, and she was left to follow her own reflections, and to calculate that the time of her absence from home would soon draw to a close.

When this long-looked-for period of Alice's return home was very near at hand, her mind was again painfully agitated, by Mrs Gordon informing her that the Sacrament would be dispensed the Sabbath before she quitted B——. Alice felt her heart beat quick at this intimation, but she was in some measure relieved by Mrs Gordon saying, that she, of course, would not wish to attend out of her own parish church, but that she would hear very profitable preaching on the different days on which there was service, in good Mr Moir's church. Alice never had heard the distinction of parishes thus made by Mrs Gordon, but she was by it relieved from any painful observations.

The thoughts of again witnessing this ordinance, without being herself a partaker, disturbed her peace of mind. She had ever seen that holy service regarded as a privilege. She had observed the devout reverence with which her father attended; she had watched the hours spent in solitude both before and after such attendance; but she had also marked the calm peace of his countenance, the increased spirituality of his conversations, the love to all his fellow-worshippers that seemed to attend such times of refreshing. Alice had often felt the

impression, that he indeed had enjoyed holy communion with his God. Was she then voluntarily denying herself a participation in the same Christian privilege? Though her ideas were become clearer, and in some degree her faith firmer, by the experience of mind she had passed through, she still felt uncertain whether she ought to attend the celebration of the Lord's Supper. She still looked to her own heart with the hope of finding in it the sincerity that would ensure her not turning back, after she had avouched "the Lord to be her Lord;" and in proportion as she did so, her ideas became dark and confused, and her faith less firm. "Oh!" thought she, "am I ever to fluctuate between hope and fear?" But carefully did she, in Mrs Gordon's family, keep her sad thoughts to herself; she knew she could receive neither aid nor sympathy from them, and she desired not to bring a bad report of the promised land. Though she, for a time, walked in darkness, hope now often whispered that it would only be for a time, and that she should yet praise the Lord.

The feelings of Mrs Gordon and her family also engaged her observation. Willy Gordon had attended more than once in early youth,

but now refused to do so, being too honest to comply with a mere outward form, and too unholy to relinquish sin. He was by his mother looked upon as in a very dangerous state. She had urged his attendance—she had got Mr Moir to converse with him on the subject; but Willy's mother and Willy's minister alike kept too much on the outside of things, to reach a naturally honest, but proud and unsubdued heart. He continued to say, that he "was not good enough to attend, and not profane enough 'o do so as a mere form." Some of the things that Alice had said to him, had awakened thought, and banished the levity he generally felt, and always expressed on the subject of religion. He felt that her religion had not the objections which belonged to that of his mother and her friends; that it was calculated to engage the highest powers, and the deepest feelings, of a rational being. He therefore treated Alice with respect, though he believed that all who followed her very strict ideas, gave up the pleasures and amusements of this life, to secure an interest in another, and he at present felt no inclination to do so.

The return of the Sacrament, in spite of his pretended levity, had always the effect of ruf-

fling his temper. Whether this arose from his mother generally at that time speaking to him of the decency of being religious, or whether some stings of conscience lay at the bottom of this ill-humour, it is difficult to say. Sure enough, Alice now saw him particularly irritable, scornful, and contemptuous towards all those about him, not excepting her gentle self, who easily forgave what others resented, and offered many prayers for him.

Mrs Gordon and Ellen presented quite a different form of bondage. With them the Sacrament was a time of peculiar gloom. They appeared to think that the service was in some mysterious way to atone for sin, and propitiate the favour of God; but this was to be accomplished in some way that their own hearts had no share in. Alice felt she would only irritate either Mrs Gordon or Willy by any remarks she might make; but with her friend Ellen she was at least not deterred by this fear, and, after many unsuccessful attempts, she succeeded in getting her into conversation on the subject.

ELLEN. "Why, Alice, do you look at me with that wistful face? And why do you try, with such indefatigable pains, to get me to

converse on a subject on which I have so little to say?"

ALICE. "Because I love you, Ellen, and therefore am anxious to know what you feel, and what are your motives in attending the Lord's Supper."

ELLEN. "I attend because every one of my age does so, and because it is a duty."

ALICE. "But what do you expect in doing so, my dear friend? Surely you expect some benefit from your approach to the Lord's table?"

ELLEN. "When I first attended, Alice, a mysterious dread hung over me. I most carefully performed every duty of devotion for a fortnight before. I slept none the night previous to the Sabbath on which I was first to become a communicant, and I shall not easily forget the agitation I experienced during the service of the day, or the joy I felt when it was safely over" (said Ellen, turning away her face to conceal a tear she could not suppress). "But that was my timid temper—my natural character, that makes me consider every thing in too serious a point of view."

ALICE. (Taking her hand affectionately.) "My dear friend, and do you now attend with more composure?"

ELLEN. "Yes; I now attend with far



greater composure, and hope that, in doing so I fulfil a duty acceptable to God."

ALICE. "Ellen, I must speak the simple truth to you. Have you ever inquired whether your present composure may not be the effect of a deadened conscience, that by habit can now dare to approach the Lord's table, without having considered the character you are bound to maintain after publicly calling yourself a Christian? Forgive me, dear Ellen, if I give you pain by what I say, and I entreat you to consider what you are about before you again take the Sacrament with your present views."

Ellen looked at Alice's earnest countenance, and at the tears that glistened in her eyes, with wonder; then said, "Alice, it is not the first time I have seen that your religion is entirely different from *that* of the friends and acquaintances I live with. Your affections seem engaged to a degree that I cannot help considering as the effect of enthusiasm. I wish to be soberly religious, and not to give up my mind to my imagination and affections."

ALICE. "Then, Ellen, you wish a different religion from that of the Bible. The first of God's commandments can only be obeyed by the affections of our hearts: it requires us to

love God. We must certainly have knowledge to understand what are the offers of salvation, but religion must have its seat in the heart, and it is the heart God requires."

ELLEN. "And it is the heart and the heated imagination that leads to all the folly we hear of being committed by those you, Alice, consider as religious. Oh! I could tell you such stories of the followers of Mr Lindsay."

ALICE. "I desire not either to hear of the follies that too often mix in the conduct of those who have knowledge enough to prefer his preaching to the cold lifeless discourses you pastor gives you, or to hear these stories through the medium of an imagination—not heated by religion, Ellen, but filled and perverted by prejudice, and worldly thoughts. Only bear with me, my dear friend, for a very little. We surely may inquire each other's sentiments regarding the ordinance you think important enough to attend, as well as the followers of Mr Lindsay. You surely will not refuse to tell me what you think ought to be our motives in doing so."

ELLEN. "I have already answered that, when I told you I thought it a duty incumbent upon all come to years of discretion, who do not mean to renounce religion in the way poor

Willy has done ; just saying, as you do, that no one should attend as a mere form."

ALICE. "In that I quite agree with Willy, though I regret the effect that the sight of form has had on his mind ; but, Ellen, tell me why you were in such agitation on first attending the Lord's Supper yourself."

ELLEN. "I feared I was not in a fit state of mind—that I should eat and drink judgment to myself."

ALICE. "And still you were very attentive in all your religious duties, were you not?"

ELLEN. "Very much so. More so than I fear I am now."

ALICE. "And you attended in a devout and serious manner?"

ELLEN. "Can you doubt my doing so?"

ALICE. "Then your frequent attendance has done you no good. Are you sure that you now attend in a right spirit, and that you do not offend God in the way you feared to do when you first became a communicant?"

ELLEN. "I think that when I was younger I felt too much on that subject ; but I will allow, Alice, that I sometimes fear I am become too careless, and I am always glad when the communion is over."

ALICE. "Surely, if God appointed these holy seasons, He did so with some object; and if you have attended often without deriving any good, it would be worth the inquiry of a frail being who may die to-morrow, whether there has not been some want of knowledge in yourself, some error in the way you have attended, that thus renders the whole service as water spilt on the ground. And if such error has mixed in your attendance, my dear Ellen, are you quite sure that you have not incurred the judgment of God already, and that the fruits of that judgment are not felt by you in the increased deadness and carelessness of your soul? In your being now satisfied with attainments in religion that appeared to you quite insufficient on your first approach to the Lord." Seeing Ellen listen with apparent attention, Alice added with earnestness, "Oh! beware of any peace in religion that leads to fewer thoughts on the subject, and any security that tends to diminished endeavours after holiness; remember, without holiness no one shall see the Lord."

Ellen looked perplexed and unwilling to enter farther upon a subject that only gave her pain. She felt unwilling to be disturbed in the apathy that was gradually creeping over her mind.

She had lowered her ideas of what constituted a religious character, and heightened her practice into a pretty regular form of devotion ; by these two steps she had attained considerable ease on a subject that, at one period of her life, had filled her with anxiety ; but after Alice came, and by every word, by the whole expression of her countenance, spoke the importance she attached to religion, Ellen felt this calm likely to be disturbed by one in so different a state of mind, and she shrunk from any close intercourse with her. On the present occasion, however, she had gone too far entirely to stop the subject ; and she permitted her friend to state her views of the nature of the Lord's Supper—for whom it was intended—and what was the state of heart needful in those who draw near unto the Lord in this means of his appointment.

In doing so, Alice delivered her own soul, and she felt her conscience easier ; but she was not permitted to carry conviction to the mind of her indolent friend, who had succeeded in deadening those feelings that at times visited her soul with alarming convictions, till now every emotion was transient and feeble, easily lost in the multitude of thoughts that filled her heart.

Alice saw how little impression she made, and

felt disappointed. The gloom that surrounded her as the sacrament approached nearer, reminded her of the fast described by the prophet, "The head was bowed as a bulrush, and sackcloth was laid underneath:" but surely it was a fast for strife and debate, for not one unholy temper was mortified. In the day of their fast there seemed only an increase of pride and self-satisfaction, flowing from the bondage that was submitted to. Oh! thought Alice, if light were to arise in this dungeon—if liberty should be proclaimed to these poor captives—if light should break forth as the morning, and the glory of the Lord should be their rere-ward, what a change would soon appear!

Worn out with a scene so depressing—so different from her father and mother's humiliation for sin, Alice, with her Bible in her hand, sought the solitude of a neighbouring wood. Her heart was oppressed. The very air of Mrs Gordon's house seemed to contract her ideas, and to prevent her thoughts rising to that God who claims from his creatures the worship of the soul—the confiding trust of the heart. Her faith became afraid to rise towards any of the promises that her Bible assured her were all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus."

There had been a sweet soft shower. Floating clouds still hung on the distant hills. Alice gazed as they gradually yielded to the influence of the sun, and rose, leaving all below them illuminated by a heat—a light, that she loved not only for its own loveliness, but also as an emblem of that sun that dispels all darkness from the soul.

Alice felt the effect of nature on her revived and quieted spirits, and, opening her Bible, endeavoured to make use of the present time in drawing near to the God of nature. She could thank her God that her thoughts and feelings were of a different nature from those she had witnessed in Mrs Gordon and her family; but she ardently desired to feel assured that she had really an interest in Christ; and, though unconsciously, she was still looking to herself for some qualification that she might offer to her God as a reason why He should number her among those to whom He would impute his free grace. Her compassionate Saviour was, however, gently leading her out of this dark and endless labyrinth, and preparing the time when her feet should be placed on a rock, against which no storm might prevail.

Alice opened her Bible at the 16th of Levi-

ticus, and there read, and, for the first time, fully understood the typical representation of Aaron confessing the sins of the people over the head of the scape-goat. When she read the 21st and 22d verses ; when she thought of the full meaning of this striking service ; when she considered that it was done by the express command of God, and was but a feeble type of the true High Priest—the offered atonement ; when she repeated to herself, “And the goat shall bear upon him *all* their iniquities, into a land not inhabited,”—her still self-righteous heart could hardly admit the thought. Her proud, her reasoning soul, could hardly accept the offer, because of its entire freeness. Musing long upon the passage, connecting it with many others, and with the whole plan of salvation—lifting up her heart in prayer to Him whom the surrounding stillness seemed to bring near with peculiar characters of love and grandeur, the darkness seemed dispelled. Her hard heart was softened, and, with many tears, she cast herself upon the free grace of Christ. She laid not only her sins, but her sinful nature, at the foot of the cross ; and for the first time felt some of the holy sweetness of such a surrender. Now it was a pleasure to mourn over sin ; now she



dared to look at it in its most aggravated form. To see that those sins which had formerly weighed down her spirits, were but a very small part of what she had to mourn over; but small streams from a fountain utterly polluted: and when from this depth Alice could look up to Him who, on the cross, said, "It is finished;" when she was enabled in some degree to "comprehend the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ," Alice was filled with wonder and shame at her former state of unbelief. Her doubts were overborne by that light from God, which she now for the first time sought with the teachable spirit of a little child. She looked up. Every cloud had cleared away from the heavens above her. Ah! thought she, how mysterious are God's ways! more clouds than these visible ones of nature have passed away under the influence of that sweet light-giving sun. I now can understand how those that are risen with Christ seek those things which are above—how their faith works by love. I now see the rich provision made for their warfare and final victory; and even for a feeble guilty creature all fulness is treasured in the true vine. In Him there is "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

So heavy a load seemed lifted off her heart, that she exclaimed, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear Him." She indeed felt surrounded by the promises of God, and her salvation laid upon One that was mighty—her sanctification to be carried on for her. One promise after another came to her thoughts as so many strong towers, into which she ran and was safe from the condemnation and the power of the adversary.

We know not how long Alice might have remained in thought under the shade of a fine wood, which to her was marked as holy ground, had she not been interrupted by Ellen Gordon. She had been missing for a long time. The garden, the neighbouring fields had been searched, and nowhere was Alice to be found. Mrs Gordon was highly displeased by an absence which appeared to her very thoughtless. Ellen was frightened and distressed at her friend incurring any displeasure, and inquired with breathless impatience, why she had remained so long absent. Alice, sorry she had occasioned any disturbance, laid up in her remembrance those holy joys that others could not intermeddle with, and silently followed her friend into the house,

and made the best excuse truth permitted her doing to the offended Mrs Gordon.

Alice also attended church with Mrs Gordon and her daughter. She heard many things she liked, and felt Mr Moir's preaching less unsatisfying on this occasion than it generally was. She trusted never again to be only a spectator. On returning from church, Alice's wonder was again excited by the change which took place in the family after this season of religion was over. Mrs Gordon and Ellen apparently laid aside their garments of devotion and solemn seriousness; and, as if to make amends for the time they had taken from what they loved to offer up to propitiate the Being they feared, they were unusually gay, and rarely at home for several days. Alice again sickened at the sight of such vain mockery, and felt much compassion for Willy, who was evidently not happy, though daily more given up to scepticism and abhorrence of all forms of devotion.

But now the time of her return home was come, and, with a light heart and gay spirits, she read a letter from her father, fixing the next day for her return to Glenhuily. From Mrs Gordon and Ellen, Alice parted with a momentary feeling of sorrow, which appeared to

be a stronger emotion than agitated them when they said adieu ; but when she held out her hand to Willy, she was astonished at the feeling with which he said, " No, no, Alice, I will accompany you at least part of the way." Willy and she had had so little intercourse of late, that she was surprised, but instantly accepting his convoy, they set out. For some time both remained silent : at last Willy said, " So, Alice, you are going to return to your own happy home." Alice replied gaily, " Yes, Willy, and I hope soon to see you there. I promise you a sincere welcome."

WILLY. " No, Alice, you would think your religious abode contaminated by such a sinner as me."

ALICE. " And what are we all, Willy, but sinners ? Only make the experiment, and then judge of us."

WILLY. (Thoughtfully.) " No, Alice, that will not do ; but why do you leave us ? I have been able to withstand the force of your words ; but the evident simplicity with which you follow what appears to you right ; the way in which you seem to act and feel, as if to a power superior to this world—has come home with a conviction of truth that I have not always been

able to resist. Had you remained, Alice, you might in time have saved a guilty wretch from perdition. You go, and he will soon return to his unbelief," added he bitterly.

Alice held out her hand to Willy with much emotion, and by every means in her power sought to draw him from the gloom in which he was plunged ; but the moment of frankness was passed. Willy now repelled every thing she could say, with that sarcastic levity he so often took refuge in, till he saw her past the wood, across the rapid burn, and within a short distance of her father's house. He then again appeared compelled to be serious by the emotion that oppressed his bosom. For a moment he stood still, then pressing Alice's hand warmly to his heart, he said, "Pray for me, dear Alice, I will be more grateful than you suspect;" and before she could reply, he had left her, and was on his way home again. Alice gazed after him. She could not understand the strange state of mind he appeared in ; but hope mingled joyfully with her thoughts of Willy, and she trusted to seeing him one day a believer in that gospel he apparently now turned from. And now her thoughts rose in thankfulness towards that God whose ways are to us so mysterious. He had

guided her by his counsel. He had caused the very darkness and errors of others to rouse her from her unbelieving fears, to lay hold of the hope set before her. And now He was encouraging her to hope for the salvation of another, and to pray that he too might be guided by a way that he knew not of. As she walked on, every tree, every shrub, told her she was drawing near home. Her heart beat high with affections that had been starved, shut up at Mrs Gordon's. The cottage appeared in sight, and very soon was the happy Alice surrounded by its dear inhabitants, and folded in her father's arms, and pressed closely to her mother's heart, as their dear, dear child. Bell Downie was there too, and shared the feelings of affection that reigned in all. Tears mingled with poor Alice's smiles, as she received every one's welcome; and for many minutes she could only weep, and return the fond caresses of her dear friends.

When composure was in some degree restored, the remainder of the evening was spent in friendly converse. Alice related much that had befallen her, but felt, that her having been received as an inmate in Mrs Gordon's family, was a sufficient reason to prevent her repeating many things that had there met her eye. She

passed lightly over all the disagreement she had witnessed among the various members of the family—merely saying, as she pressed little Mary and Christie close to her, that Christians only knew what it was to love each other in truth and sincerity. With some emotion, Alice proceeded to speak more freely of Willy Gordon than she had done of either his mother or sister. She soon succeeded in deeply interesting both her father and mother in her young friend, and it was agreed that Willy should be invited to come and spend some time with them during the approaching summer.

This conversation convinced Thomas Shaw, that religion had lost none of its power over his daughter's mind, and that she now enjoyed a peace of mind she was formerly a stranger to. Poor Alice was again softened to tears, when, after a day spent with the friends she loved so well, that day was closed by her father's heartfelt prayers, and when, towards the end of his devotions, he offered up his thanks for the safe return of his child, and for that mercy that had watched over her, binding her heart more closely to her God and Saviour.

Bell Downie, overjoyed at the return of her friend, soon found that she might express all

her feelings to one who now also tasted "the joy of the Lord." Alice loved the child-like confidence with which Bell had accepted the offers of Christ, and the warm devotion with which she was living near to the Source of all light, strength, and consolation. She felt her own unbelieving fears and doubts reproved by the contrast; but Bell Downie thought her friend's faith had been more tried. Alice knew more distinctly why she believed than Bell did. She also appeared to have more enlarged ideas of the character of God, of the divine nature of Christ. She more surely trusted to the aids of the Holy Spirit; and Bell often said that the deep troubles of her soul had been good for her, and reminded her that the "trial of her faith was more precious than of gold that perisheth."

Thus Alice and her friend went on in all the occupations that belong to their age and situation, till the sacrament was again to be administered in Mr Methven's church. Bell Downie involuntarily stole a glance at her friend, and at the moment recalled some of the painful ideas that had before mingled in her own approach to the table of the Lord without this dear friend; but in Alice's countenance she only read emotion unmingled with pain.



In conversing with her father on this subject, Alice explained the state of her mind and feelings with a distinctness she had formerly been incapable of. Thomas listened with much interest, then said—"You, my dear Alice, have fallen into a very common error, and one into which every Christian does at one period or another of their course. You have confounded justification with sanctification."

ALICE. "How so, father? I fear I do so yet in some degree, for I do not fully understand you."

THOMAS. "You, my dear, felt justly that the sacrament is only intended for believers: you also were aware, that those who sat down at that table, profess that they mean to act as Christians—to walk in the footsteps of the flock that are there fed and refreshed by the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep. You had some idea of the solemnity and importance of thus calling yourself a Christian. You feared to put your hand to the plough, and then to look back, but for the sincerity and the uprightness of your intentions at least; you thought you must look to your own heart, and there you did not, you could not find them, because they were not there. You desired to be

enabled to say with Peter, 'Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;' and had you, my dear child, under the impulse of present feeling, said this with a sincerity that satisfied you, you would have had to learn, like Peter, that the moment this gracious influence was withdrawn, you not only denied your Lord, but added sin to sin in doing so."

ALICE. "But, my dear father, I may yet be trusting to the feelings of the moment."

THOMAS. "No, my child, you are not entirely doing so, I am convinced. The merciful guidance of God has led you, by your very doubts and fears, to study your Bible with earnestness. You have now gained more knowledge, and see the way in which God can be just, and still the justifier of sinners."

ALICE. (Thoughtfully.) "The precious blood of Christ is my only hope. The Lamb, without spot or blemish, the only security of my soul. The value of that blood is sufficient to wash away the deepest guilt."

THOMAS. "Not only do you now, I trust, see your justification wrought out for you entirely by Christ, who has borne all the punishment, and fulfilled all the law, that you might 'by his stripes be healed,' and clothed in the

robe of his righteousness imputed to you, stand before God as justified, 'for God so loved the world, that He sent his only begotten Son to die for them,' and 'we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Your sanctification must be carried on by the powerful, though secret, aids of the Holy Spirit. It is He that must 'work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' and, under his guidance, you will successfully 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Let it now be your care to study the nature of that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, which are the fruits of the Spirit, and look to Him as the dispenser of the gospel mercies, to write them in your heart."

ALICE. "Oh, father, I have still much to learn. All appears to me wrapped up in the midst of twilight."

THOMAS. "Be thankful, my dear Alice, that the dawn of light has arisen in your soul. Keep close to the Source of light. Study your own heart, and you will find that, just in proportion to your turning your thoughts from Christ, sin and temptation prevail. Believing views of Him, as He who died for you; holy

meditation on his power, work, and faithfulness,—are the only effectual means of reviving to your soul. In this fountain you must wash and be clean, and out of this fulness you must receive even ‘grace for grace.’ With these feelings you will approach the table of the Lord, and you will there, I trust, find your God faithful to his promises. Your hatred of the guilt and power of sin will be increased, by believing views of the price it cost your Saviour. If you come as poor, perishing, blind, your understanding will be enlightened—your faith rendered more simple and firm—your love more ardent towards Him, who, when He instituted this service in the full, the known prospect of the hour and power of darkness that awaited Him—the cup of God’s wrath to be drunk to the dregs, ere man could be saved, yet so loved them, that, even then, He ‘gave thanks,’ and could say, ‘With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;’ and one principal fruit of this love, is, that you should have all God’s laws written on your heart.”

ALICE. “Oh! that I could come with a heart and mind more devoted.”

THOMAS. “Let that very wish form your particular request to Him who, though He lis-

tens to you at all times, does so more especially in those means of his own appointment. To whom else can you go for an increase of holy devotedness? and can you doubt this to be a request according to his holy will?"

ALICE. "How simple you make my preparation and my attendance, when to myself it has appeared so awful!"

THOMAS. "It has appeared to you awful because you thought you must feel no doubts of your being a Christian. You slighted the *hope* that trembled within you, and had yet to learn that faith and unbelief will war together till life is closed, and death is 'swallowed up in victory.' And, in this state of mind, instead of endeavouring to look to Christ, instead of first believing on Him, you looked on yourself, and turned away your eyes from the only object that could enable you to see your own sinfulness *willingly*, and to probe it to its fullest extent, because the lowest depths of such contemplations could not shake the security of your salvation, which is built on the 'Rock of Ages.'"

ALICE. "Then I see that I have first expected to find in myself the fruits of faith; and then, attaching a merit to these, to offer them instead of, or with my faith."

THOMAS. "Exactly, my child; and your mistake is a common one, and one you will often feel the power of in your future experience. To believe simply the word of God, upon the testimony of that word, is a high attainment. But, now that I trust the Saviour is revealed to your soul, you will find Him 'the way, the truth, and the life.' In every season of darkness look to Him that you may have light; stay yourself upon Him only."

Strengthened and encouraged by the instructions of her father, Alice prepared for the service before her. She knew that not only the grace of faith was needful, but to have the heart prepared—the mind opened, to receive the benefits offered; in a service, where, by a visible representation of what her Saviour had done and suffered, she hoped to have the feeling of it impressed on her soul with a liveliness she had not yet experienced.

When, on the fast day, Alice saw her own minister ascend the pulpit—when she heard him, in the deepest strains of humility, confess the many sins that pollute the hearts and lives of the children of God—deplore their unbelief, their alienation of heart from God—their many failures in duty—Alice felt he was speaking the

very experience of her heart, and she thought of the high priest confessing the sins of the people over the head of the scape-goat, and earnestly desired to lay hers on that divine Surety who could alone carry them into the land of forgetfulness.

As the Sabbath drew near, Alice desired to have her faith strengthened, and her hopes enlarged. She endeavoured to enter into the full spiritual meaning of some of the gracious promises of aid—of large manifestations of the power of divine grace—that as she was assured that in God she was not straitened, she might not, seated at the Lord's table, be straitened in herself, but experience the power of Christ resting upon her. She often found this attempt checked by a look at her own sinfulness, but she endeavoured to rise above her sin to Him that hath promised to give the victory over it; and the Lord heard her prayer, and blessed her attempts; for, when Alice, on the Sabbath day, found herself in the house of God, and seated at the sacramental table—when she saw the elements set apart from a common to a spiritual use, and listened to the devout exhortations of the holy men of God who guided her devotions, --she felt as sure of the presence of her God as

if the heavens had opened and she had heard the encouraging invitation, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "My strength shall be perfected in your weakness." She had felt agitated during the first part of the service, but now she was "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" and such strength, she felt, purified her soul, and increased her "hungering and thirsting after righteousness."

Thankful and happy, Alice left church to return to the duties of life, and to bring into practice the principles she had there felt strengthened. Bell Downie could now rejoice with her friend, and impart to her all the experience of her mind. She complained to Alice that, during the particular service of the day, her thoughts were less disengaged and less devout than she had desired; that, in the evening, she had been able to attend in a more collected spirit, and retain more both of the impression and instruction she received.

Alice, on her part, felt that, after her mind had been intensely fixed on one object, it was apt to start aside, like a deceitful bow, and a peculiar degree of watchfulness was needful,



after her attendance at the communion, that she might not lose the spirituality of her feelings, or lower her endeavours after holy obedience.

For both these evils the two young friends knew that there was no remedy but in keeping close to their Saviour by prayer and watchfulness. And, by the divine blessing, they were enabled to act a steady part in that path they had entered in the morning of life, and which leads to glory, honour, and immortality.

THE END.