

Guidance.

Being perplexed, I say,
Lord, make it right!
Night is as day to Thee,
Darkness as light.
I am afraid to touch
Things that involve so much;
My trembling hands may shake,
My skillful hands may break;
Thine can make no mistake.

Being in doubt, I say,
Lord, make it plain!
Which is the true, safe way
Which would be vain?
I am not wise to know,
Nor sure of foot to go;
My blind eyes cannot see
What is so clear to Thee.
Lord, make it clear to me.

—Selected.

THE YOUNG LAIRD.

A Story of the Shetland Isles.

(Continued).

CHAPTER II.

Folk said that Donald Grierson, the young laird of Barda, was a young man to be envied. Perhaps he was. The isle of which he was sole proprietor was not a valuable possession, and the few tenants who lived on it did not pay their rents very regularly, but the young laird troubled himself very little about that. He had an income derived from a more profitable source than the rocky isle which he loved with a love out of all proportion to the benefits he derived from it; and he could, therefore, afford to indulge the natural generosity of his heart by overlooking the shortcomings of his poor tenants.

Don had been very much his own master all his days, for his father had died when he was an infant, and his young mother, being pretty, selfish, and fond of worldly pleasures, had soon contracted a second marriage, and at the same time exchanged life at the quiet old Hall, for a home in London. There she soon became absorbed in a whirlpool of fashionable life, and had few thoughts to spare for her Shetland boy, who fortunately had found good substitutes for parents in his father's mother and the minister of the parish.

Don's disposition was naturally good, and he had not abused the liberty which those two friends had given him during his boyhood. He was fond of study, and his education had progressed well under the tuition of Mr. Morham.

The Manse being the only "gentleman's house" in Barda, except the Hall, it naturally happened that the two families were much thrown upon each other for society, and in that way a very close bond had been formed between them.

The young laird was prime favourite with the minister's boys, who had been indebted to Don for many a holiday, and many a bit of pocket-money. To be sure, he not seldom had led them into scrapes also, but he always contrived to pull them through triumphantly, and as the scrapes were incurred through nothing worse than boyish heedlessness or love of fun, the minister had been content to shake his head, and say, "Take care, Don, take care."

The ladies had no always judged so leniently, for ladies, as a rule, have an unfortunate habit of judging an action by its consequences rather than from its cause. So when Don had persuaded the Manse boys to go off sailing on a stormy day—or otherwise led them into some rash exploit—Mrs. Morham had loudly affirmed that the young laird would come to no good, and the Lady had shaken her head and entertained dire forebodings regarding her grandson. But Don had survived all accidents, and his morals were by no means impaired either, when sorrow fell upon the two families in quite another way.

Mrs. Morham died, and two years later, Don's kind old granny slipped quietly out of this life into the next, and thus the Hall and the Manse were left without their heads. Those ladies had spent many hours together over domestic affairs, and the ailments of the fisher-folks, for they were notable housewives, and doctors to boot. But they were something more also. They were large-hearted religious women, clinging with feminine tenderness to the old-fashioned creed of their fathers, and drawing from that source, wisdom and strength, which alas! are seldom derived from the faiths which men build upon a fever and momentary foundation.

The religion which is the mainspring of a life (a successful life I mean) cannot fail to commend itself, and the example of old Mrs. Grierson and the minister's wife had left a lasting impression upon many besides the members of their own household. I think, however, that no one, of all those who had benefited in that way, had put one lesson of religion so taught to such good account as Jennie Morham.

Being an only daughter and eldest child she had early learned to conduct herself with the dignity of a grown woman, but it was the spirit of piety which animated her

to assert that dignity in so gentle and astute a manner that it ruled the boys, including Don, without allowing them to know that they were being ruled. They were all Jean's obedient servants, and never dared to rebel against her authority. When she raised her eyebrows and said softly, "Poor boy," the youth so addressed felt his delinquencies to be an uneasy burden, and straightway got rid of them. It was believed in the Manse that Don would rather be shot from a cannon's mouth than cause Jean to elevate her eyebrows and say, "Poor boy!" Yet she was two or three years his junior, and certainly not half his size!

At rare times the young laird had gone up to London to visit his mother, and he had always been welcomed kindly enough by her husband as well as herself. But there was something wanting in her love. Perhaps it was the warm personal interest which forms so large a portion of a true mother's affection, and which makes the children feel that their concerns are very near their mother's hearts.

Don was very sympathetic and social. He had been nurtured in an atmosphere of warm love, therefore his visits to London had been few and brief, and the pleasures of the city never gave him such enjoyment as he derived from his boating expeditions among the rocks of his native Isle. Yet Don was foolish enough to yield to a vice which has its root in the high-pressure system of city life; and, short as were his visits to London, he yet contrived to carry from it to his simple country home a taste for that which has wrecked a multitude of promising lives. Unfortunately his life was not such a busy one as it ought to have been. He was not idle, or fond of idling, and when out with his gun or rod he studied nature closely. He interested himself in the lives of the fisher-folk so that they early had learned to look upon their young laird as their best friend; but in spite of all that Don's life lacked aim, and the routine of busy work which engrosses a man's thoughts and keeps him out of mischief.

Also his heart had not stirred with the Divine impulse which is the beginning of all noble action, and it was not wonderful that the minister, knowing the young man's character well, should fear for him under these circumstances. Mr. Morham was singularly unworldly in his aims, and when he became aware of a mutual attachment between his daughter and the young laird, his first thought was of Jean's happiness—not the fact that she would be Lady of Barda, and an important personage in Shetland society. As we have seen he was not by any means elated by the news she had brought, and he sat for a long time after she left him pondering anxiously over Jean's engagement.

But though he had such mingled thoughts on the subject, Don had no doubts whatever regarding it or himself. His strength of body had imparted a great measure of self-reliance to his character, and he believed entirely in his own power to do whatsoever he chose to set about doing. He could put the curb upon himself, he was very sure, whenever he found that any wish or taste was gaining too strong a hold upon him.

Don did not know how insidiously a besetting sin lays its hand upon the reins of self-government and usurps authority before its victim is aware of his own weakness. He did not know how strong is the chain which a seemingly frail and harmless "weakness" can bind around a man,—how imperceptibly its links are cast about him.

It has not occurred to Don to think seriously of the little "weakness" he has imported from London. It would be time to do that when it began to show some sign that it meant to take a hold upon him.

As I said Don had no doubts, no fears, and left the Manse garden with a light heart after bidding Jean good-night. He knew that her father loved him, and he never supposed for one moment that Mr. Morham would offer any objections to their marriage.

"I know, of course, that I am not a regular out-and-out good sort of fellow," he said to himself as he took the path to the sea-shore, not caring just then to return to his lonely home. "No, I don't make a y pretence of being a pious man. But Jean knows I mean well. She knows I wouldn't do a mean thing for the world. She knows I try to help the poor folks, and to be a decent sort of friend to anybody I come across,—that's about all I am. And it satisfies Jean,—at least it has been enough to make her love me. She thinks a heap of me, dear little soul! and it must be my care never to give her cause to think less of me." There Donald paused, and a flush came to his brow, as memory presented before him a picture of himself which he would not have liked that Jean Morham had seen.

He pushed his fist down his jacket pockets, and held his head less erect as he strode over the pebbles, and muttered to himself, "I suppose she heard about that last affair. She must know, for nothing could occur in Barda without being retailed to every person on the isle. Yet she has never hinted at it, or shown the least disapprobation—and that is not like Jean if she knows. Oh, well. It isn't such a big crime, only something to make a laugh about. I'll tell her myself how I lost my head, and I daresay she will lift her eyebrows, and say, 'Poor boy!' as usual when I get into a mess. But I'll take care she never sees me make a fool of myself."

Just then Donald's musings were interrupted by a ringing "coo-ee" coming to him from the water, and looking up he saw the Manse boat speeding landwards. Although the Dim of a Shetland summer evening pervaded the atmosphere it was not difficult to identify the boat and her occupants. Young Lowrie Morham was at the helm and was steering somewhat recklessly, considering the stiff breeze which was blowing, and the amount of sail which the boat carried. Fortunately for the Manse boy his companion was older and more experienced, and was keeping a wary eye upon tiller and sheet.

Don answered the call of his young friend, and then stood still where he knew the boat would come in, saying to himself at the same time, "Lowrie is getting too fearless. I must caution Ole to be more careful when they are out alone. The boy thinks his recklessness resembles my daring—but—there is a difference Lowrie boy! a vast difference!"

(To be continued).

A Present God.

We are not to think that God did not guide other lives and overrule other events besides those mentioned in Scripture. His dealings with unmentioned millions were not less direct and special than with those whose names and deeds are recorded. Some are mentioned that we may see he dealt and still deals with all. The flowers you gather into a bouquet are not the only ones that grow in God's field, and many like them have sprung up, and will still spring up, at the bidding of the warmth and light of the sun. Those that you see are but samples to tell you of thousands out of sight. Thus the lives and events brought to light in the Bible story are but illustrations of what God has ever been doing, and is still doing, in every land and nation under the sun.

God is present in our lives. If we are indeed his children, his care, more tender than a father's, is still over us. Could our eyes be opened as were the eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan, we too would see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about us. The angel of the Lord still "encampeth round about them that fear him."

We are prone to forget that God now lives and rules, that he is in our lives and in the events taking place about us to-day. If you seek him and trust him he will be your shepherd as he was David's, his grace will be sufficient for you as it was for Paul. Guidance and help wait for you. You need only to open your eyes and reach forth your hands. Devoutly study your Bible, and it will become daily a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your pathway. The Father now waits to give you the Holy Spirit to guide you unto all truth. "Ask and it shall be given unto you." If we take the first upward step God will make the next step plain and help us to take it also. "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine."

We need not then look back with vain longings to the days when God dwelt with men. His abode is now with the loving and obedient. To those who obey him he says: "Lo, I am with you always." We have made mistakes. We have sinned, and feel our unworthiness. But if we seek God he can overrule our mistakes. If we repent, he will forgive our sins.

Reader, your life is under God's overruling care. You cannot escape his vigilance. Your sin will not be unnoticed. God is not mocked. You cannot leave God out of the account with safety. His presence overshadows you, and whether you do good or evil his power encompasses you. It is well to be at peace with him. It is well to seek him while he may be found.—*Cumberland Presbyterian.*

Talking With God.

A little girl, whose father was an infidel, went to visit a friend of hers whose parents were both Christians. While they were reading the Word of God she listened very attentively, but when the father knelt reverently down and engaged in earnest prayer, she seemed amazed, and glanced all around the room to see with whom he was talking, and see-

ing no one looking at him she was puzzled. As soon as she had opportunity, after the service was over she whispered to her friend and asked:

"Who was your father talking with this morning?"

"Why, he was talking with God," said her friend.

The little girl knew nothing about God, or his dealing with men, so they tried to explain to her who and what God was, and then told her the 'old, old story' of the cross.

To all this she listened very eagerly, and when they had finished she inquired very earnestly, "Can't I talk with him too?"

"Certainly you can," said they, "for he loves little children, and has said, 'Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

She seemed very happy, and when she got home that night she jumped into her father's lap, and told him about those good people that talked with God, and what they had told her about him; and then, with her little face beaming with joy, she exclaimed: "Oh, father, they said I could talk with him too, and he would hear me."

She did talk with him until her father and all the family learned to love and commune with God.

Lost Time.

"O, Miss Jennie," cried a little girl to her Sunday-school teacher, "I am so sorry, but I have lost a whole morning."

"Lost a whole morning?" repeated Miss Jennie, with a grave look upon her sweet face. "How was that, Clara?"

"Why, mother was so busy, and she left Harry in my room; and really, Miss Jennie, the little fellow was so full of fun that I have done nothing but play with him."

Just then Harry put up his dimpled arms to "love" Clara, as he called it in his baby talk. He pressed his lips upon her cheek, saying, "Me love oo' Clara."

"You have not lost your morning, Clara," said her teacher. "You have helped your mother, and you have bound your little brother closer to you by your kindness. Such a morning may have been well spent, my dear."

A few days after this Mrs. Palmer was seized with a severe illness. She could not bear the least noise or confusion, and Harry's noisy play distressed her very much. So Clara took the little fellow to her own room, rocked him to sleep at night, and cared for him almost as well as his mother could, until Mrs. Palmer recovered.

"My dear child," said the physician, as he placed his hand upon the little girl's head, "if your mother had not had so kind and thoughtful a daughter, I fear that she would not have recovered so soon, if at all."

Thus little Clara had her reward. Never call that hour lost which is spent in making others happy.

The Mercy-Seat.

No sweeter or dearer place on earth than the mercy-seat. There the soul rises in holy desire, and heaven comes down to bless. A mutual giving and receiving pass between the suppliant and the King. The one gives his heart and life; the other his favor and help. The one receives grace and salvation; the other receives praise and service. Blessed are they who know, prize, and frequent this wondrous meeting-place between man and God. They share in most sacred, inspiring, quickening, and elevating communications. They visit the scene of the holiest fellowships and of the purest delights. About their calm retreat shines a perpetual sunshine, blows the balmy air, and is shed the most heavenly odor. From its height are obtained the clearest, brightest, and loveliest views of God, of Christ, of the Church, of the future. Earth loses its enchantment, the glory of the incarnate Lord dawns upon the vision, the fruits of the Spirit are gathered, the delights and experiences of the new creation are secured, strength and victory in the battle of life are obtained, and the foretastes of Paradise enjoyed. Linger then, O Christian, around the throne of grace, and draw from it invigoration, and blessing, and honor, and helpfulness while life lasts.—*Presbyterian Observer.*

Random Readings.

He who can suppress a moment's anger may prevent a day of sorrow.

Reputation is what men and women think of; character is what God and the angels know of us.

The results of sin do not always stay with the transgressor, they are often entailed upon others.

Day by day we are making the influences which will presently be our rulers; we are making our destiny. We are choosing our habits, our associates, our traits, our homes. In time these acquire a power over us which enslaves our will, and we neither can nor will break loose.

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