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# JOHN'S WAY.

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A Domestic Radical Story.

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BY

MRS. ELMINA D. SLENKER,

Author of *Studying the Bible*.

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NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED AT THE TRUTH SEEKER OFFICE,  
33 CLINTON PLACE.

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It was a lovely day in June when Miss Olive Newton, the minister's daughter called on Mrs. Slocum, the wife of one of the deacons of her father's church, to accompany her on a short excursion of a mile or two in the country, so that they might enjoy the lovely scenery and the pleasant weather of the glad out-of-doors, and at the same time make a few calls in the rural suburbs, and obtain some donations to the missionary cause, and a few subscribers to the American Bible Society. They took a horse-car to the terminus of the city proper, and then proceeded on foot to the outskirts of the population and there began their business of soliciting aid from house to house; and as Miss Olive was a beautiful girl and had a way of looking up so beseechingly into the faces of those upon whom she made her demands, her appeals were seldom in vain, especially if it happened to be one of the stronger sex whom she was soliciting.

At last they came to a house which was rather isolated from the rest. It stood in the midst of a flourishing garden, the neatness of which, and the many rare flowers adorning the walks, showed that the owners were something more than the average run of people—at least in some respects. They rapped at the door, which was opened by a middle-aged woman dressed in plain but neat attire. She invited them in, and, as soon as they were seated, they introduced the object of their visit and produced a book and pencil for the purpose of taking down the good woman's name and subscription, but to their surprise she refused to give anything, alleging as a reason that they worked hard for the little money they had, and she did not think it right to give it away, as they had a large family to support. The ladies were quite taken aback by this reply and turned the conversation by inquiring how many children they had. Mrs.



Proctor replied that they had five, between the ages of four and nineteen, three girls and two boys.

"I presume they are at school," said Mrs Slocum.

"No, madam," replied Mrs. Proctor, "John will not send them to school. You see John has a way of his own, and he does not approve of our common schools here. He says the children only waste their time learning things that will never do them any good. I know girls who spend hours every day learning the names and localities of all the counties in the different States, and the small towns and rivers, none of which are of any use to them or ever will be. And they spell by rote whole columns of words from Webster's spelling-book, and do not know the meaning of nine-tenths of them. We wish our children to learn that which will be of some practical benefit."

"But," said Miss Newton, "do you not think geography a useful study? And are you willing to bring up your children so ignorant that they cannot tell the name of the capital of their own State?"

"Oh, as for that," replied Mrs. Proctor, "John has a way of his own about teaching geography as well as teaching other things; besides I could not spare the children from home. Each one has a certain share of the work to do, for we have no drones in the hive, and we try to study and learn all the time, even while we are at work."

And as they sat talking, Mrs. Proctor's busy fingers were industriously darning away at a pair of old stockings, thus improving her opportunity and showing that she practiced as well as preached.

"If I may be so bold," said Mrs. Slocum, "I would ask, what church do you attend?"

"Why," said Mrs. Proctor, "John has a way of his own, and we do not attend any; nor do I see how we could conveniently, for Sunday is our only day of recreation, and John takes us up the mountain or down the river, and the children catch butterflies and bugs, and gather flowers rocks, and mineral specimens and other curiosities, and, in the season of them, we pick a few berries."

"What! On the Lord's day?" said Miss Newton, "Have

you no Bible to teach you the sinfulness and wickedness of Sabbath-breaking?"

"Why, you see," said Mrs. Proctor, taking up the second stocking, and slipping a small gourd into the heel preparatory to commencing work upon it; "why, you see John has a way of his own, and he has never yet bought a Bible. And he says, too, that the Sabbath is a day of rest, and each one is at liberty to enjoy it as he thinks proper."

At this instant in comes Fanny—a young girl of twelve—who had been on a visit to a sick playmate, and had taken her a bouquet and some jelly.

"How is Janey this morning?" said Mrs. Proctor, after introducing her daughter to the ladies.

"She is no better," said Fanny, "but she sent you many thanks for the jelly, and Susan stayed to sit with her to-day. But here comes Willie." And as she spoke, a bright-looking little boy of four years came bounding into the room, all excitement, with something fast cleaved in his chubby fist.

"Here, Fan," said he, "just see what I have found;" and opening his hand he showed them a large black beetle.

"O Willie," said Fanny, "it is only a scarabee. We have several of them, and they are so common we don't care for any more; so throw it out and bring us a pitcher of fresh water."

Willie starts off cheerfully for the water, while Miss Newton resumes the conversation by saying, "You have some beautiful flowers here."

"Yes," said Fanny, "we all love flowers and try to have something new every season—or new to us at least. I remember how nice we all thought grandmama's flowers used to be, and she only had roses, snowballs, lilacs, marigolds, daffodils, and lady slippers, and all of the common sorts too. But we could not be satisfied now unless we had a variety of choice plants. Please come out in the yard and see some of our pets. This is a centrepetalia peony, and a fine specimen too; and these white ones are so full and large, and pure as the driven snow! We got the root direct from China, where it is native. This bed is set apart for tulips and hyacinths—the early ones are all out of

bloom, but we are careful to have a few late ones so as to prolong the flowering season as long as possible. They are all choice bulbs, imported direct from Holland. We get a few new bulbs each fall, as they deteriorate so in this country that the bulbs of our own raising are never so large or so full of bloom. This *Dianthus Spectabilis* is a native of northern China. We call it 'bleeding heart,' because the flowers look like hearts dripping with blood. See how gracefully they hang all along the peduncle, each one suspended by a tiny thread. Our *dianthus* are all fine specimens. We sow the best seed, and as fast as they bloom, throw away all inferior plants so that what we have are nearly as fine as carnations. This is a Canary bird vine—a species of *tropelium*—you see the flower looks like a little canary bird. Our lilies are in this long bed. We have twelve varieties. This is the *Lillium Auratum* from Japan. It is called the king of lilies, and when it was three years old it put up two stems, perfectly flat, four inches broad, and five feet high, and one stalk had thirty-six, and the other fifty blossoms.

And so she went on from bed to bed, giving each flower its real botanical name, and often its class and order, and informing her visitors of the locality where it grew native, and giving many other interesting facts concerning them, and really astonishing the ladies by the extent and variety of her information upon flowers and floriculture, and all was said in such a quiet, matter-of-fact way, that it showed she was not trying to put on airs, but only intent upon entertaining her visitors in the best way she could.

Mrs. Slocum now told Olive that it was time to go, so they bade the Proctors adieu, and with a pressing invitation to call again they departed.

As soon as they were fairly out of hearing Miss Newton turned to Mrs. Slocum and inquired what she thought of this strange family.

"Why, really, Olive," said she, "I hardly know what to think of them. They seem to be good, industrious, neat, intelligent people, and Fanny knows more about flowers than all the girls in our seminary, though she has never been to school a day in her life. If John does have a way of his

own it must be a pretty good way. But, Olive, I think there is a skeleton in the house somewhere, and I mean to find it if I go there many times more."

"Why, Mrs. Slocum," said Olive, her blue eyes opening wide with astonishment, "what do you mean! I am sure they all seemed happy, contented, and united. I don't see what they can have to hide."

"Oh, I don't exactly mean that," said Mrs. Slocum, "but I do think there is something wrong about them. I looked around carefully to see some book, paper, or picture that hinted towards religion, but in everything about them, as well as in their general conversation, the grand scheme of Christian salvation seemed to be quietly tabooed or ignored. Why, I almost fancied they were heathens as I thought about it, and looked for some token to say they were not. I saw cases of bugs and butterflies arranged in groups according to their nature, and shells and other curiosities, but there was not a thing that showed any recognition of our holy religion. I tell you, Olive, there is something wrong with that family, and I'm bound to find out what it is. Let's go there next week, and make a long call, and perhaps we shall penetrate the mystery."

"All right," said Olive, "I am glad to go, for I really do like them."

So one fine day the following week found them at Mrs. Proctor's gate, and, going up the gravel walk, they were met at the door by Fanny and her older sister, Susan, a fine-looking girl of seventeen. They were soon seated in the parlor, and, after a few moments conversation, Susan asked them to please amuse themselves for half an hour, as they were just finishing their week's washing, and as soon as they could get it done they would be happy to enjoy the society of their visitors.

Being left by themselves, the two ladies began to look around them with great interest. The room was almost a complete museum of natural curiosities. On the centre-table was a large herbarium, two feet in width, filled with pressed flowers, leaves, and grasses, with the botanic name of each specimen, its place of nativity, history, and general character, neatly written beneath. On the walls hung cases

of shells, and others of bones or skeletons of small animals, such as rats, mice, squirrels, and rabbits, and others of fishes, and others still of beautiful moths, with the pupa, chrysalis, cocoon, etc., showing the changes they undergo before they come to perfection.

The ladies were so busy examining all these that time fairly flew by on wings. Then Fanny and Susan came in; and the bay window, with its wealth of green-house plants and vines, was shown to the visitors. Then several brackets containing shells, minerals, fossils, and Indian relics, were looked at and discussed, Susan and Fanny giving the name and history of each. When all were once more seated, Olive unwrapped her presents, a beautiful Bible, bound in red morocco, and a prayer book to match. On the fly leaf of each was written: "A present from Olive Newton to Miss Fanny Proctor." The books were received with thanks, for they were almost a curiosity in the house, as they had never had any before. But Susan told them they had quite a library of other books, and she opened a large book-case which was filled with works on science, history, travels, geography, botany, mineralogy, geology, agriculture, and the writings of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and other great minds.

"Why, who reads all these?" said Olive, looking at Susan in astonishment.

"Father reads aloud to us evenings while we sew and do other work, and we read ourselves when we have leisure," replied Susan.

"Well, I think it must be dry reading," said Olive, shrugging her shoulders.

"Not at all," said Susan, "we find them brim-full of good, sound sense, and father explains them so clearly that even the little ones learn a great deal from them. The upper shelf, you see, is filled with novels; Dickens, Thackeray, Cooper, Bronte, etc., but I believe we all prefer these books as a general thing."

A walk around the garden was now proposed, while Mrs. Proctor and Susan prepared dinner. Here they were joined by Willie and his younger sister, Grace, who was a pretty, fairy-like sprite of seven years, and as full of talk as children

usually are when they are so lucky as to have good listeners. The two little ones had each a plot of ground to plant, water, and weed, and they both showed intelligence far above their years. Even little Willie knew the botanic names for the few wild flowers in his diminutive plot, though his tongue seemed too short to give intelligent utterance to the long Latin words; but Grace knew both name and history of all in her little flower-bed, and it was really interesting to hear her talk so wisely about things so far beyond what children of her age usually know.

Dinner was now announced, and all repaired to the dining-room, where they found a substantial repast of ham and eggs, the best of graham bread, early garden vegetables, and a cup of tea, and all seemed to enjoy it. Then Willie, of his own accord, brought out his book to say his lesson, and Grace also; and they answered each question correctly, though Susan asked several that were not in the book.

They now returned to the parlor, and Olive began to examine the herbarium, and was surprised to see so many new and foreign plants and grasses, and asked Susan how they obtained them. Susan informed her that her uncle followed the sea and brought them many curious things from foreign parts. Then she went to a closet and brought out a globe, and showed her where many of the plants, shells, and other things came from.

Meanwhile Fanny had seated herself quietly in a corner to examine her new Bible. She read the title-page, and then, for the first time in her life, commenced reading the first chapter in Genesis. She read it two or three times over, but could not understand it; and as her father had always instructed her to master every difficulty as she proceeded, and never to run over a book for the sake of reading it, she laid it away till she should have an opportunity to ask her father what it all meant.

As it was growing late, the ladies now took leave of their kind entertainers. Susan told them she should be pleased to have them call again, and apologized for the absence of Mrs. Proctor, saying that she had been sent for by a sick woman to help her to clean house.

"We would have been glad to have seen your mother,"

said Mrs. Slocum, "but we have enjoyed your society so well that we have scarcely missed her."

But just as they got to the gate they met Mrs. Proctor returning home, and so stopped a few moments to talk with her and praise the neatness, beauty, and thrift of the garden.

"Yes," said Mrs. Proctor with a frank, honest smile, "John likes to have everything look decent. He has a way of his own, and he instructs the girls and they take charge of this department. It is a pleasant and healthful employment. The exercise in the fresh, open air, and the dally sun-bath, as John calls it, are the best of tonics. He says, too, that contact with the newly-stirred soil of old Mother Earth imparts life, vigor, and elasticity to the human system. There is a subtle influence that is ever emanating from the earth, especially when we are working, sitting, or lying on the ground, that builds up the wasting tissues of the body; and why not, since the earth is our very own mother."

"Yes," said Mrs. Slocum, "I've always noticed that children who roll and tumble about in the dirt are always healthiest—but there are few women who could stand it to dig and weed and hoe as your girls do."

"Oh! yes, they could," said Mrs. Proctor, casting a look of motherly pride upon her fresh, healthy, robust-looking daughters. "Almost any woman of an average constitution could take the whole charge of a garden, flower-beds and all, if they would gradually accustom themselves to it, and not try to do too much at first. John says it is all nonsense about women being so feeble and delicate. He says if men wore tight dresses, trailing skirts, high-heeled shoes, long hair and piles of jute on their heads, and treated themselves like hot-house exotics, they would have no stamina either. John has a way of his own, and he never allowed one of the girls to have a dress so tight that she could not draw a full breath without feeling the pressure. A loose measure is always taken when the lungs are full of air, so there is never any compression about the waist, which is the most tender and flexible portion of the whole body. John says nearly all female diseases are caused by mistakes in the mode of dressing."

"But long hair is natural, you know," said Olive.

"Yes, but piling it all up in a compact mass on top of the scalp, till it heats the brain and sours, and is foul with mildew and rancid oil, isn't natural," said Mrs. Proctor, "and it doesn't braid, twist, and coil itself naturally, but on the contrary it hangs loose and flowing, and as we workers can't well have it in our way, we wear it short as men do. John has a way of his own in this matter, and he says it isn't right for the male sex to have all the conveniences; and short hair and comfortable clothes are the greatest conveniences, and when one is accustomed to them they look better, too. How would we like to see men with long, braided locks, curled and flowing wigs, or big chignons and huge braids piled on their heads; and if we were not used to them, they would appear just as ridiculous on women."

"It may be so," said Mrs. Slocum, thoughtfully, "but really I never saw it in that light before."

"Nor I either," said Olive, "but it is so late we must surely go. Good-bye to you all."

"Well, good-bye," said Mrs. Proctor, shaking hands with them in a cordial manner, "I do hope you will soon come again."

"That we shall certainly do," said Mrs. Slocum, "for we have enjoyed our visit very much."

"Well," said Olive, as they passed out of hearing of the house, "that cottage is certainly a most enchanting spot, is it not?"

"Yes, indeed it is," said Mrs. Slocum, "and the society of those girls is really fascinating, and Mrs. Proctor has such sound, sterling, good sense. I would like to see John; he must be a real unique specimen of the genus homo. I almost feel like an ignoramus when talking with Susan and Fanny; they know so much about all sorts of interesting things."



## CHAPTER II.

**AFTER** the visitors had gone, Fanny had again taken up the Bible and once more commenced reading the first chapter of Genesis. But it was just as much of a puzzle as ever. She could not make it agree with the known facts of science or philosophy. "In the beginning—" When was the beginning? Did it mean any definite period? And her mind tried to run backwards to the time when the "solid rocks and the everlasting hills" floated through space in a gaseous form, billions of years ago. Was that the beginning? No! Her mind could go back of this still further, for trillions of years; but was *that* the beginning? No. All the matter was still in space, and subject to various influences. When, then, was the beginning? "Well," thought she, "I will wait and ask Olive about that." So she read on, "God created the heavens and the earth." Who was God? Where did he come from? In what did his power lie? and where was his abiding place? They say, "In heaven." But where is heaven? In what portion of space is it located? How large are its domains? Can our scientists tell how far it is from the sun! Can it be seen by our most powerful telescopes? Is it subject to volcanic eruptions like our earth, the moon, and other planets?

Thus did Fanny soliloquize and ponder upon the subject which for ages has puzzled wiser heads than hers; but she found no light, so that it was left for Olive to explain; "though," said she to herself, "one thing I am confident of, and that is, the earth is not yet finished. Great changes are all the time taking place even now on its surface. Climatic changes; rising and falling of its crust; leveling down of mountains and hills and filling up of valleys; the formation of new islands and the disappearance of old ones; changes in the courses of rivers, the shape of seas and other bodies of

water, and many things show that the 'creation' of the earth is not yet completed," and she began to wonder if the story was not a fable, a legend, or a fiction. But Olive could tell her, for she had valued the book so highly that she must know all about it.

In a few days Miss Newton called again at the cottage, and this time alone; so the two girls went out in the garden to sit in the arbor.

As soon as they were seated, Fanny began the subject by saying, "My dear Miss Newton, I have been trying to read the book you gave me, but I must confess I cannot understand it at all; it appears to me as if it were romance or tradition rather than plain, sober facts in accordance with Nature's unchangeable laws, and I do wish you would be so kind as to explain a few things for me."

"Certainly, Fanny," said Olive, "I will do it with the utmost pleasure. You see, as you have never read the book you cannot expect to be informed of the truth it contains, whereas I have read it and heard it read daily, ever since I can remember, and consequently am perfectly familiar with its contents. From the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations it is the word of God, given to man through Moses and the prophets. Therefore it must be true. It explains the creation of the world and all that therein is, the fall of man, and how sin and death entered the world; man's redemption through Christ and his sufferings; it shows the boundless love of God in giving his only begotten son as a sacrifice to save a fallen race, and 'tis true there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved from eternal misery and punishment."

"My dear Miss Olive," said Fanny, "I have heard and read detached statements of all this before. You know father is our only instructor, and, as mother says, he has a way of his own, and he tells us never to read faster than we can understand the subject, and to carefully weigh every sentence so as to gain knowledge; and he says we must at the same time use our reason and compare each statement with the laws of nature and known science. He is very liberal providing us with books on science, and other valuable works. But I recollect once when a friend pressed

buy a Bible, his excuse was, that he did not and never could understand it, and that moreover, for thousands of years no man ever had understood it, but all varied in their interpretation of it, so I do not wonder that it puzzled me; though I confess I feel a real interest in the book from its title, age, and the commotion it has caused in different parts of the world. You spoke of sin and death entering the world, Will you explain what you meant by that?"

"Oh, certainly," said Olive, and she began repeating, parrot-like, the old formula, "by sin death came into the world, and sorrow by the disobedience of our first parents. We only see man now in his fallen, degraded condition. God made him perfect, he created him to be happy, and placed him in the beautiful garden of Eden, where all was peace, love, quietude, and beauty. No storms of wind or rain, no snow, ice, or frost to chill the delicate flowers, fruit, and herbage. Celestial fountains and sparkling springs were the source of four beautiful rivers, whose sands glittered with gold and precious stones."

"But, Olive, how could man live forever? His nature is much the same as that of animals, and even vegetables; all are subject to the same infirmities. Each individual of each species has its allotted time to live and mature, then to decay and die, if no untoward circumstance cuts it off before the final end is reached by Nature's slow but sure and certain process. The avalanche that slides down the mountain declivity, and crushes the lion in his lair, would equally crush the man in his cottage; the flood that overwhelms all animal life in its pathway stops not in its headlong course to turn aside for man himself, nor could it ever, in any age, no matter how sinless, have done so. Every species of existence commences life in a feeble condition and needs protecting care while young, if it is expected to reach maturity. The soft, tender spear of grass, the beautiful flowers in this garden, the sturdy old oak in yonder forest, each raises its tender plumule from the soil, feeble and helpless, yet struggling for the right to live, grow and mature. The strongest crowd out the weakest, monopolize sun, air, foothold, and the nutritive particles within their reach, thus growing, little by little, till they attain perfection; then comes decay

and death, when all return back to the earth from whence they came; and wherein does man differ in these respects? Millions of possible men are never born at all, millions more are still-born, and millions more die after a few hours, days or weeks of life: only a very few, comparatively, reach maturity, and to do this they have to take nourishment to sustain the ever-wasting tissues that life itself exists upon. If there had been no decay in man what need had Adam to eat of the fruit of the garden at all? We eat and sleep to replenish and recuperate—to renew what is lost, wasted, dead—and therefore, my dear Olive, I cannot see how Adam could have been flesh and blood like ourselves. He could not have experienced hunger, want, or pain, for these are forerunners of decay and death.”

“Yes, my dear Fanny, but you forget the Bible is the word of God, and God’s ways are not our ways. You reason from the carnal mind; you do not perceive that with God all things are possible, and what we do not know here we shall know hereafter. You are, I trust, aware that man is in a fallen state, that his very thoughts are evil continually. We need divine grace to assist us to understand the Bible correctly.”

The animated discussion was here interrupted by a call to dinner, but though differing so widely in opinion, each one felt sure of the victory. Fanny had faith in Nature’s unvarying laws and the properties of matter, while Olive rested her case upon the Bible as being the word of the only true and living God. Still, she could not help being struck with the soundness of Fanny’s reasoning and the real logic of her arguments; but was not her father a minister, called by God himself to preach his word? He had passed an examination before the bishops and was regularly ordained, so he *must* know what was true and right, and what the Bible commands us to believe and to do. And Fanny was wondering how any educated person could for a moment entertain such ideas as Olive had been expressing to her. “Why,” thought she, “they must sacrifice their reason and see the solid facts float away from their minds, like feathers before the wind. Father says the mind is generally moulded by the company we keep, and at school we some-

times, learn too much—not too many facts—but too much sound and dogma, too much theory, and too little practice.”

Dinner was now over, and a tune or two on the cottage organ, and a walk in the garden followed, and then the two girls repaired to the little arbor, and, like two gladiators before either are vanquished, they eagerly renewed the morning contest.

“If you please, Olive,” said Fanny, “I would like your opinion concerning the fall of man and original sin.”

“Oh, yes, Fanny,” said Olive, “it is all plain as noon-day,” and launching out glibly and boldly into the subject, she continued: “You see they were disobedient and did what the Lord commanded them not to do, and you know that was wrong, and consequently they brought upon themselves and their posterity the punishment due for their transgressions, and surely you would not side with wilful disobedience? If your father were to tell you not to do a thing and you did it—would not that be very wrong?”

“Yes, Olive, but my father would never tempt me to do wrong, nor wilfully suffer me *to be tempted*, when he knew I would not be able to resist my desires. What parent would set a dish of tempting fruit within a little child’s reach and expect it to let it alone, and do this before it was old enough to reason and reflect, too: and Adam and Eve were only children as yet in the knowledge of obedience! Neither would my father place any bar between me and useful knowledge. If he could cause me to know good and evil by giving me any of the fruit of the garden he would do so at once; for it stands to reason that a person who would live a long life and not know the one from the other would be called a fool or an idiot; and if my father had another tree that would give me power to live forever he would also give me that; while this heavenly father you tell me about wished to withhold both, and *has* withheld the latter, anyhow. My father says ignorance always causes suffering, and that knowledge is our greatest blessing. Then, too, I do not think love of punishment is a divine attribute. Nature never punishes. The ills we endure are only the legitimate consequences of erroneous modes of living, and are brought upon us by our own ignorance and misdeeds; not

as punishments, but as results of broken laws. A God would be like Nature, above petty revenge, and always striving for the greatest good to the greatest number. You make your God to be meaner than a savage; for savages only torture and kill the body in this life, while your God punishes all for the sins of two, and punishes them eternally! I once heard a preacher say in camp-meeting that the innocent, smiling, prattling babe was born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and heir to eternal misery! That the pure, gentle, innocent maiden was just as surely doomed to hell's direst torments, as was the coarse, brutal, murderous ruffian whose whole life had been steeped in sins of blackest dye—that is, if neither of them were Christians! believers in Christ and him crucified! Now, Olive, you know in our courts of justice each prisoner is punished in accordance with the active part he took in committing the crime; but here, in the scheme of salvation, you and I are classed as equally guilty with Adam and Eve, and must suffer exactly as they suffered; yet you call the author of all this a God of love. I can't see where the *love* comes in. I should spurn love from any source that denied me justice, and call it mockery and insult—wouldn't you, Olive?"

"Well, Fanny, I hardly know what to say. I never looked upon things that way. I've heard father preach scores of times upon this same subject, and have read it for myself, time after time, and it *seemed* all correct, just, and right; but you have put it in such a strange light I am really bewildered, and shall have to wait and ask father, and explain to him your way of reasoning about it?"

Just then little Willie came in with his box of alphabets and wanted to say his spelling lesson, and so the letters were spread out and short words mentioned, and he placed the letters in position to spell "cat," "dog," "man," and other simple words; and, to Olive's astonishment, he did it all correctly.

"I do not see how you could teach so young a child," said Olive.

"Why, you see father has a way of his own, as mother says, and he never allows a child's mind to be crowded with too many things at once, lest the attention become

weary. When he bought this box for Willie he took out O, Q, G, and C. You perceive they are formed much alike, so he only let him have these four letters till he learned each one perfectly, and for each one learned his reward was the first kiss when he gets home at night, so his young mind was all attention as he strove for the prize. Then W, U, V, and Y, were given him and mixed with the first four, and so on, and in two weeks he was perfect in all the alphabet."

"And is this the way you were taught, Fanny?"

"Yes; and it is but six months since father permitted me to write my own name, though I could read almost any writing three years ago. You see father is a mechanic, and he says it is wrong to put tools into a boy's hands till he has the knowledge to use them properly. Wait a moment and I will show you my copy-book," and off she went to the house, and soon returning with it, gave it to Olive. It was a book of twenty-four pages. The first copy was "Remember," written in a smooth, round hand.

"You see," said Fanny, "after I had written it once father pointed out this *m*, which you see comes below the line, and that *e*, which has too large an eye; and the next time I wrote it I corrected those mishaps, but made that shocking *b*. He pointed out each error and an improvement was made in the ensuing word. Only one line was written at a sitting, and errors corrected before they became habitual, so I did not have to write whole books uselessly, as so many do at school.

As Olive ran the book through and saw the gradual improvement on to the end, she felt really ashamed of her own hand writing, that she had spent years in perfecting, and which was not nearly as plain or as pretty as Fanny's.

They strolled over the garden, looking at each new flower that was opening; then took a walk up Rosemary hill, thus passing the afternoon agreeably.

Olive returned to the city in rather a thoughtful mood. Her visit had been pleasant, but the long talk on the Bible had awakened serious thoughts and queries. She recalled many passages that she had read, but which now, in the light of her new ideas, looked so different from what they

did then; and she determined that she would have it all made clear to her before she saw Fanny again.

The usual family prayer at night, which she had heard a thousand times before, seemed entirely new to her now, as she criticized each sentence, wondering to herself what Fanny would say to this or that expression; some parts seemed presumptuous, some ridiculous, and others foolish and nonsensical. She went to her room, full of thought, and at last concluded she would take reason for her guide, and let conscience dictate what she should do. So she bent her knee in prayer for instruction, as she had done so often before. She tried to pray, but her tongue was dumb and her thought fettered. She felt that it was idle to ask God for anything, for he knew all things and would do what was best for her without coaxing. He was too great and noble to care for flattery or praise. He knew his own power and wisdom, and her frailty and weakness, without her having to tell it. Then she thought she would say the Lord's prayer. But how could she ask him to *give* her daily bread, when she knew she ought to work for it herself? She was not sick, helpless nor crippled, and how could she *beg*? The whole of it seemed just as unreasonable as her father's prayer did. So she simply said, "Thy will, not mine, be done," which is only another phrase for, "I will submit cheerfully to what is inevitable."

As she rose from her knees she exclaimed:

"Must I then importune and tease,  
And cringe and fawn before I please?  
Can God enjoy the groan, the tear,  
Fit only for the despot's ear?  
Our every want does he not know?  
Or are his kind compassions slow?"

The moon shone clear and bright, and seating herself by the window she let her thoughts wander at will, over texts and passages of Scripture—over promises that were made; punishments threatened and inflicted; wars, thefts, and murders, committed in the name of the Most High—little, trivial incidents recounted that were of no value, while all was silent, dark, and blank concerning things of great moment. She thought of Job, of his afflictions and sufferings



A man perfect in all his dealings, a man who feared God and eschewed evil; and what was his reward for all the sufferings with which God allowed him to be afflicted? Of what value were six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, fourteen thousand sheep, and a thousand she-asses? Would not the care of them be a perpetual burthen? Could they blot out the memory of all he had suffered? Could wealth repay for such injustice as he had been the victim of? She thought of the sons of God, who came to present themselves before their father, in company with Satan, and wondered who they were, and how many sons God had, and were they the same sons who visited the daughters of men. And she thought about the sufferings of Christ, when the rocks were rent and the sun refused to shed its light upon such a spectacle as the Son of God nailed to a tree, to save from misery a fallen race!

Would it not have been better to have confined Satan than to have held a parley with him and then sacrificed his youngest and best-beloved son? How many good, perfect, and upright Jobs are there now in affliction for the pleasure and diversion of God and Satan? "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "Joy, with the Apostles, was to suffer persecution for Christ's sake." Could she really feel these sayings to be good and right? Would it be any inducement to men to choose the right if they knew this was to be the reward—"chastisement" and "persecution"? Who among her acquaintances was good according to this test? There was poor Sam Long, half eaten up by a cancer, but he was neither very good nor very bad—only a common working man, a church-member but not very pious; and Ann Hall too, she was a drunkard and a thief but dreadful religious; while Tom Hayes was "blessed in basket and in store," and had not been inside of a church in years. What did it all mean? Was she dreaming? How could the words of a simple country-girl like Fanny Proctor, who had never been to school nor read the Bible, stir up such a tumult in her mind? She said to herself, "She has touched some dormant spring in my soul, and aroused a train of reasoning that will lead me—where? Alas! I know not; but my conscience is clear, and I can stand up in bold innocence be-

fore Omnipotence and say I have done the best I could under the circumstances. The good book says, 'Let us reason together;' and we do reason upon all worldly transactions, so why discard this noblest attribute of humanity when thinking upon spiritual affairs? What do I really know about God only as I have been taught? Should I have thought of its taking three persons to make one if it had not been drilled into me when a child, and my reason was stultified and dwarfed?" And Olive slowly left the window, undressed and went to bed. But it was long ere she slept, for she seemed to have entered upon an entire new state of existence, and her mind had expanded so suddenly that it appeared as if she was all soul and no body at all; but "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," at last hushed the wild tumult, and she sank into the deep, dreamless slumber of the young and the innocent.

Olive rose the next morning and read and examined the Bible an hour before breakfast. She read it as she had never done before. Like Fanny, she pondered over every sentence and reasoned upon it as she would upon any other book, or tried to do so as far as prejudice and habit would allow her to. She was astonished to find how many things came as stumbling blocks in her path. Much was unreasonable, much puerile and ridiculous, much actually blasphemous, indecent, and vulgar. She thought that after morning prayers and the usual chapter was read she would speak to her father about it, but her courage failed her, and so it did when she went to see Mrs. Slocum, and she was compelled to keep within her own breast the knowledge of the change that was taking place therein; but she took every opportunity to read and examine her Bible, and tried to put as favorable a construction upon everything as possible. She read in Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not eat of anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger, . . . or thou mayest sell it unto an alien." "Is this a command of the God I love? Can I sing praises to a God who bids me give or sell diseased meat to strangers simply because they are not of our church—not holy like ourselves? Is this honesty, hospitality, justice, or righteousness? Did not Jesus die for the stranger, and sweat drops of blood

equally for him and for me? Why is it that father or some of the ministers do not preach from this text and explain it? Strange that I never thought of this horrible command before, for I've read it many times in my regular perusal of the chapters. I'm sure if I had seen it in any other book it would have shocked me terribly." She read on, "This our son is stubborn and rebellious. . . a glutton and a drunkard . . . all the men of the city shall stone him with stones that he die." "Is this God's word? Weak, ignorant parents bring up a child so that he is gluttonous and disobedient and becomes a drunkard, then they go and have him stoned to death because he will not obey them? My copy-book says, 'As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined,' 'The child is father to the man,' and so parents are more open to blame for children's faults than they are themselves. Why then does a just God say that the helpless child shall be stoned to death? Did not God make the child, and did he not know it would be stubborn, and why did he not let it die in infancy while it was comparatively good? Oh dear," said Olive, "I need a world of light, and where shall I find it? Reason alone must be my guide.

• Reason divine, thou gift of Heaven—  
 The greatest gift that ere was given—  
 Oh, in my heart take up thy throne;  
 Let me to thee subjection own;  
 To search for wisdom be my pride,  
 And thou, Oh, thou, my only guide!"

## CHAPTER III.

It is a lovely morning and all nature smiles in calm serenity as Mrs. Slocum and Olive once more start to visit the Proctors. Olive thought she would open her heart to Mrs. Slocum on the way, for she was looked upon by the young of her church as a "mother in Israel," and had been a true friend to Olive for many years, but the diversity of scene called up other thoughts and no opportunity was found to speak until they arrived at the cottage. There they met with a hearty welcome, and Susan and Fanny led them to the parlor where on the table lay the Bible, Olive's present, and Mrs. Slocum soon took the opportunity to ask Fanny how she liked it, as she saw several book-marks in it.

"Well," said Fanny, "to speak frankly. I do not like it at all. Some of the historical parts are entertaining if true, but there is so much that is improbable and impossible."

"Oh, my dear Fanny," said Mrs. Slocum, looking very solemn, "with God all things are possible. Why, he divided the waters of the Red Sea to let the Israelites pass through, and piled them up like a wall on either side, and when Pharaoh and his hosts came, they rolled down over them and drowned them."

"Mrs. Slocum," said Susan, "I don't think Fanny has read that far yet, but two years ago I had a Bible in my possession and read it all through, though I kept it from the younger children, for it was so vulgar and obscene that I thought it better for them not to read it till their minds were nearer matured and their principles stronger and more fixed. You have alluded to Moses leaving Egypt, and you will recollect that God himself hardened Pharaoh's heart time after time so he could not let them go, and I think if any one sinned it must have been himself, for he had as much power to soften as to harden his heart, and

only a willfully cruel tyrant would choose to do evil just to show his power."

"But, Miss Susan, you know God's ways are not as our ways. God wished to let his power be known to the nations of the earth, and multiply it by signs and wonders."

"But, Mrs. Slocum, could he not have shown his power in doing good, great, and noble things? Could he not have made Pharaoh's heart melt with love, and boil over with charity and humanity, and cause him to send the children of Israel away with gifts and blessings, rather than compel them to 'borrow jewelry' that they might steal and keep it. Look at the slaying of the first-born, the plagues of frogs, fleas, and lice, turning all the water to blood, and such like filthy deeds. How much grander it would have been had he created a fleet of ships like the Great Eastern, or a railway train, with a bridge over the sea, or tunneled under it, and conveyed his chosen people from Egypt, and taught Aaron and the rest of the priests the arts of engineering and navigation, and then if Pharaoh had made any opposition, Aaron could have blown the steam-whistle, and my word for it, the Egyptians would have scattered to the four winds with fear and fright, and we should have had proof of the story in the great inventions then given to the world. Waters never pile up in 'walls on each side' now, and we haven't the shadow of a proof that they ever did, for all fluids seek a level, and nature's laws are unchangeable and eternal. Your preachers are always telling people not to lay up treasures on earth—that rich men cannot get to heaven; yet I was really astonished, when I read that book, to see the great value God put upon gold and silver and precious stones. Did it take any more labor to create diamonds, pearls, and rubies than it did to create the common flint-rock or the granite of our mountain ranges? Could he not have made gold as plentiful as iron had he so chosen? Please do not think me irreverent if I ask whether he does not find our small script very acceptable when gold is not attainable, and would he refuse a promise to pay, written on a greasy slip of paper, if it was redeemable? When you take up a collection for him and his cause in your church,

you do not look at the kind of money, but its redeemable value."

"O! Miss Susan, you should not talk so."

"I know it, Mrs. Slocum, but the hen will fight for her chicks, and the tigress for her cubs. The Egyptian mothers were robbed of their first-born, all for no fault of their own; and must our sex always bow in humble submission to an imaginary and blood-thirsty God who says that women are only made as help-mates to men, and must submit in all things to them, because they are inferiors, and made out of his rib? The Bible has very few good words to say for women. It makes Eve the first transgressor, and as a penalty for the sin, man is always to rule over woman. She is to merge her very name in that of some *he*, and ever after be only *Mrs.* Smith, Jones, or whatever it may be. Men have always bought and sold wives and concubines, but who ever heard of a woman selling her husband? The Bible allows man to divorce his wife, but she must put up with him, be he ever so mean. It was held to be a crime to even bear female children, so that if a woman was unfortunate enough to have a girl-child her fine was doubled—her sin-offering that she had to pay for submitting to mother some man's child! We read of many men 'who walked in the fear of God,' but, strange to say, I cannot call to mind one woman that did. Woman was always snubbed and sneered at as weak and sinful. Even her loving, tender nature was made a snare for her. She leaves the doomed city but turns to give it one last, parting glance, and lo! she becomes a pillar of salt, and forever after stands as a monument of her disobedience and a rubbing-pest for cattle, or a lick for them when they wish for a relish."

They were now joined by Mrs. Proctor, whose entrance was announced by the click of her knitting-needles. Mrs. Slocum turned to her and asked what she thought of the Bible as regards woman.

"Well," said she, pausing to take up a dropped stitch, "John and I have a way of our own. We try to do the best we can for the happiness of all. He manages his business and I do mine and if either needs advice we confer together, as two heads are better than one. When I was a

girl, mother used to be quite a Bible reader, and I must say I thought God was a great busy-body. He seemed to be always interfering about things of little account, and which were none of his business. What difference could it make to him whether a kid was seethed in its own mother's milk or in that of some strange goat? If I cook a bit of veal, I put the mother's milk in it, and so do all church members, and never think of Scripture either. If John wishes any particular dish for supper, I get it for him if I can, and he don't go poking his nose in the pot or the oven either, nor grumble if the biscuits aren't light, for he knows I do my best, and he would scorn to make the burthen heavier by growling over what is irremediable. I don't want a God who is peeping at my dresses and skirts to see if they have a linen warp and woolen weft in them. It often happens that one is forced by circumstances to wear mingled goods, and it is not at all necessary that God should trouble himself about it, just as if he had nothing more important to occupy his mind, or no greater laws to give his children. When he made those skin suits for Adam and Eve, where did he get the skins? There was no death till they ate the fruit, and no time after that to tan the skins, and it must have been mussy work to sew the raw, bloody hides. Why did he not create a broadcloth suit for Adam and a silken robe for Eve? I mind, too, of her reading how men should shape their mustaches or 'goatees' as they call them; how careful the Lord was that they should not 'round the corners' or 'mar' them; and once God had to go over a river and get a razor to shave with. (Isiah vii:20.) Now John will not borrow anything that it is possible for him to get along without. If his razor is out of fix, he will go without shaving till he can put it in order; if his axe handle gives out, he has us pick up chips and break small wood till he can make another; if we get out of tea or coffee, we drink milk or water till we can get some, and if the flour-barrel is empty, we make a meal of potatoes and other vegetables."

"But don't you ever lend?" said Olive.

"Yes, we lend, but if people borrow too much, we tell them it is not convenient or best to borrow only in great emergencies; that it is a waste of time, and that few per-

petual borrowers ever pay back all they get, for they do not remember so many things. I have a long list of "things lent, and not returned," and the borrowers are well-to-do people too—only careless and forgetful. Borrowing is one of John's hobbies. He has got us all so that we would almost as soon beg as borrow. And when we do borrow, he has us take back more than we got, to pay for trouble, and also to hinder us from getting too much, as that makes it a loss to the borrower instead of, as is now so often the case, to the lender. I had one neighbor who borrowed a cup of coffee every few days, and at last I gave her a cupfull, and said, 'don't bring it back, but when you get some, wrap it up and lay it away, and keep borrowing that, and each time return it to the paper, and you will always have it and never have to borrow.'"

"Well, did she do it?" asked Olive.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Proctor, smiling, "but she never came to me for any more; so I hope she profited by the advice. I used to think it a pity the children of Israel borrowed all that jewelry and those clothes of the Egyptians, and that the Lord borrowed a razor, for it set a precedent for all future borrowers to follow after. I mind one day mother was reading in the Bible about "fowls" that went "upon all four," and all creeping things that were unclean, and if a man but touched the dead carcass of any of them, be it but a snail, a mole, or a lizard, he was to wash his clothes, and be unclean till evening; and if the carcass of any of these creeping things fell into a wooden vessel, it was to be put into water till evening, and if it was an earthen vessel, it was to be broken, and the whole of the contents wastefully thrown away. I thought God had better have been watching things of more importance, for instance, attending to our neighbors up in the planets who are in the habit of throwing stones down upon our world: one fell on a woman not long since and killed her; perhaps you saw the account of it, Mrs. Slocum."

"But mother," said Susan, "you know father says it is doubtful whether those stones come from any of the planets; he says they may have been formed in the upper ether, or are portions of dead worlds that are moving through space."



"Yes, Susan, I know that, but when I was a girl, I was sure they came from the moon, or some planet belonging to our sphere, or else that God sent them right from heaven, to warn us of the wrath to come. Now I know they are only natural effects; let the origin and cause be what they may. I mind, too, where she read about the "sons of God" coming and visiting the daughters of men; and I thought then, and still think, that he had better have kept them at home, since he was so awful particular in his commands about mixing seeds, mixing different races of animals different materials in making a piece of goods; aye, even in taking two different animals—as an ox and an ass—to plow with; yet he let his own giant sons come and mix with our pigmy race and have children by them. If they got tired of the monotony of heaven and wanted an outing, why didn't he put them on board of a comet's tail and send them through space a thousand years or so? John says travel among strangers is a good school, and they might have been improving themselves amongst their betters, rather than descending to associate upon an equality with a 'fallen, wicked, sinful, miserable race' like ourselves. But I must go and attend to my cooking now that I've given you my opinion of a little portion of the Bible," and as she turned the seam she rolled up her knitting and left the room.

Mrs. Slocum, with all her Puritanic notions, could not resist a smile at the shrewd, practical observations of Mrs. Proctor, and the simple, homely manner of her delivery; and her views insensibly began to relax a little as she thought it over, and she wished Mr. Slocum could have heard it, especially the part pertaining to dress and cooking, for the Deacon was a master hand at finding fault with his food and clothes.

"Oh!" said Susan, "you must take that as a sure sign that he is a faithful follower of the Lord and his commandments, and you ought to rejoice, as it will doubtless be counted unto him for righteousness' sake."

Mrs. Slocum pressed her lips rather closely at this remark, but made no reply.

A walk up the mountain was now proposed, and they had

a gay time amongst the rocks and wild-flowers; and then, sitting down to rest under the shade of an old oak, Fanny and Susan sang an old song appropriate to the surroundings, one verse of which ran as follows:—

"I'm glad I've learnt to love the things  
That Fortune neither takes nor brings;  
I'm glad my spirit learned to prize  
The smiling face of sunny skies;  
'Twas well I clasped with dotting hand  
The balmy wild-flowers of the land;  
They ever live in friendship sure—  
My old companions, bright and pure.  
Oh! I am glad I learned to love  
The tangled wood and cooing dove;  
For these will be, in good or ill,  
My dear companions, changeless still."

With hands full of flowers, rock-moss, snail-shells, and other tokens of the wild-wood ramble, they now returned home, ate a light supper, and then the ladies prepared to leave. Fanny went to Miss Olive and begged her to take back the Bible, for she said she had seen several obscene and very vulgar passages in it, and by what Susan and her mother said, she thought it a very bad book. But Olive insisted on her keeping it for the present at least; said she, "It will do to refer to; for I begin to see things in a very different light, and if I can judge by the looks, Mrs. Slocum finds the ground somewhat shaky beneath her feet. I mean to have a good talk with her, for since my mother died, she has come nearer to filling her place than any one else, and I must open my heart to her, for it is, I assure you, very full."

In the evening, when Mr. Proctor and Harry arrived home, there was a long tale to tell of how they had passed the day, and what each one had said, and Fanny produced her Bible and told how she had wanted Olive to take it back, as it was not a good book. But, as you are aware, John had a way of his own about teaching and giving instructions, and his reply was "Come with me into the garden and I will give you a lesson," and leading the way to the corn patch, where the corn was about thirty inches in height, he said, "You all see how this corn flourishes, do you not?"

"Oh yes," said Fanny.

"And you see, also, how feeble and pale the weeds are underneath?"

"Yes, father."

"Well, I say let the weeds alone; that is, keep the book till to-morrow evening, and then tell me why I give you this advice."

Then they went in to supper, and Susan very soon said she knew the lesson.

"So do I," said Harry. But Fanny seemed puzzled. After supper John told them to each get their slates and write the explanation separately. Harry and Susan soon had it done, only worded a little differently, and in about an hour Fanny brought her slate too. Her solution read thus:—"Weeds are the bane of the agriculturalist. If they get the start when young, they smother the corn; but if kept down till the corn gets well up, they do little damage. It is just so with the human mind. If error and false opinions start while the mind is young, they are hard to eradicate; but once store the mind with truth and facts, and error cannot take root; and this is why you say keep the Bible, is it not, father?"

"Yes, Fanny, you are right, and I am proud to think that you, at your age, knew enough to have the Bible put into your hands and read for yourself the crude, absurd, and ridiculous notions of our forefathers; many of which are prevalent even in this enlightened age. The world is all before you, and you must expect to find opposition even to many of the simplest facts, from those who have been educated in ignorance and in opposition to the laws and properties of matter. You know the composition of water and its nature; now suppose any one were to tell you that an axe would swim upon its surface, what would be your opinion?"

"Why father, I could not believe it."

"Why not?"

"Because it is opposed to all previous experience—opposed to reason and the laws of gravitation."

"You are right, Fanny, but recollect that your father was educated to believe it."

"But you could not really believe it?"

"Yes, Fanny, I did. You see the weeds of error were cultivated, and I found it very difficult to eradicate them even when I learned they were weeds and was able to distinguish them from facts and truth. As you begin to associate more and more with the people around you, you will find a great many who still believe, not only that iron will swim, but other equally impossible things, and they will try and persuade you that you must believe these things also. By reading the Bible you will be aware of the weapons they use, and be the better able to combat them with science and reason. Old Theology is doomed, but she will struggle long in her death throes, and thousands will marshal themselves in her ranks, determined to save her at any risk. But 'Ever the truth comes uppermost', and error must yield in the end. So let us gird on our armor for right and justice, my dear Fanny, and each do our level best to hasten the glad day when

"Superstition bows her head;  
Falsehood sleeps among the dead  
And Bigotry's exulting tread  
Will ne'er be heard."

## CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Slocum and Olive were silent for a while after leaving the Proctors, for each was too full of thought to talk. Olive had not said much all day, for she wanted to let Mrs. Slocum show off her zeal, and besides she had enough to do to listen and think, as she saw plank after plank slipping away from beneath her feet. She noticed, too, that Mrs. Slocum did not talk with the energy and enthusiasm she was wont to use when arguing theological questions with a Roman Catholic or Universalist. *Then* her tongue was used to be very fluent, and texts of Scripture would be thrown back and forth like snowballs during the first snow-storm—but Susan's arguments hit hard like flint rocks, while hers fell harmless and inefficient. At last Mrs. Slocum turned to Olive and said: "Well, Olive, what do you really think of all this? Can it be possible that for twenty-five years I have been praying to, calling upon, and believing in, an imaginary being that has no existence save in the minds of those who create him? It looks as if it might possibly be so, yet I hardly dare to think so for fear I may be struck dead for my wickedness. I've been reflecting a great deal of late, and wondering if any of the prayers that I have ever offered up for the sick, for the missionary cause, or for great revivals to occur, or any other, as I then deemed it, important event to take place, ever effected anything. I begin to think as I look at things in the new light, that good people prosper just as well outside of a church as in, and that churches are just as liable to be struck by lightning, destroyed by tempests, and other accidents, as are school-houses or private dwellings, and even more so, for the tall spires attract the lightning, and illy put up rods endanger rather than protect, while the crowd that accumulates at times is too great a weight for the timbers, and all gives

way, crushing, maiming, and mangling the occupants, while the Divine Protector (?) never lifts a hand to save his property, or the still more important immortal (?) souls! Sometimes when thinking of these things, I have wondered if it was not caused by the disreputable conduct in some of our church-members, and the way we have of screening them from justice and exposure lest it should reflect disgrace upon God's chosen people, and hinder the spread of the gospel. Now there was Hannah Brown, who, by washing, scrubbing, and cleaning, had saved up enough to buy that pretty cottage on Green street. As long as she was able to work and drudge around, God and the society owned her, but when old age and infirmities took hold of her God and church both forsook her, and William Parker took her to take care of, and got her to sign a deed, giving the cottage to him in pledge for it, and he soon run it all out by extortionate charges, and poor Hannah had to go to the poor-house. True, she was a colored woman, but always kind, honest, and good.\*

"What you say is all correct, Mrs. Slocum," said Olive, thoughtfully, "and if outsiders knew the half that *we* know they would not be drawn so easily into the meshes of the church as they now are. The secret history of our church would be enough to sicken every member of it, if each one knew it all; but it has always been a motto of the churches to do all for the glory of God, and cover up and hide all that could harm the "cause of Jesus." I shall ask my father those things and tell me whether the Bible is all or any of it really God's word, and as divine and holy as I have always thought it. I know he will be displeased and hurt, but I must have the truth, let it cost what it may."

"Well, Olive," said Mrs. Slocum, sorrowfully, "I can not blame you for wishing for a reason for your faith, and especially since I myself have begun to wonder whether, after all, there may not be some mistake about it."

The two friends parted with kind good-byes, and Mrs. Slocum got home just in time to get the deacon's supper ere he arrived. As he sat down Mrs. Slocum began the con-

\*A fact.

versation by informing him that Olive and herself had been out to spend the day.

"And what success had you, and how did you find the people on the missionary question?" asked the deacon.

"O, we did not call on that business," said Mrs. Slocum; "we went to Proctor's on Rosemary Hill."

"Why, that's where you said they had no Bible, and never sent their children to school, is it not? I should not think you would care to go among such ignorant and wicked people to visit."

"But they are not wicked, and John has a way of his own, and looks after the children's morals and education himself, and they are far above the average in both."

"But of what avail is all that, without a knowledge of Christ? What do they know of the precious promises the Bible contains?"

"Promises! yes, there *are* promises, but, like the promises of politicians, they are seldom fulfilled."

"Why, Abby! what are you talking about? You astonish me! God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent."

"Yet," responded Abby, "if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord, have deceived that prophet."

"How often," said the deacon, rising from the table, "have I had to remind you that women should keep silent? If they want to know anything they should ask their husbands. This is God's holy word, and bless the Lord for it," continued the deacon, angrily.

"Well, it may be his holy word, but the word also says that an ass was allowed to speak, and it would take such an animal to convince some men of their folly."

"Abby, Abby! I do believe you are going crazy. What *do* you mean."

"I mean to speak the truth if it is to be found in the Bible," retorted she.

The deacon hastily seized his hat and hastened to the parsonage to commune with his reverence, as he felt sure that Abby had turned to an Infidel, Deist, or, perhaps, an Atheist, by associating with those Proctors, whom he termed

ignorant heathen; and by the time he arrived at the parsonage he had got on a heavy pressure of steam. He was admitted at once to the library, and gave vent to his feelings by putting the worst possible construction upon the whole occurrence.

"Yes," said he, "before she was contaminated by those vulgar, sinful people she could go out and collect five or ten dollars a day for the missionary cause, for Abby has tact—she has—and brains, too, if she only knew how to use them—but she hasn't brought in one cent for the cause since her first visit to those abominable Proctors."

"I believe," said his reverence, "that my daughter accompanied your wife to Mr. Proctor's, for I've heard her speak of being there."

"O, yes; Miss Olive generally goes along with her."

"And you really think sister Slocum has imbibed Infidel opinions by calling at that house?"

"Of course she has."

"Well, I'll call Olive and see what she says about them," and so saying he rang the bell and sent the maid for Olive, who soon appeared and, at her father's request, took a seat. He then asked her if she had not been to Proctor's several times of late with sister Slocum.

"Yes, father," said Olive.

"And you told me that they had no Bible—did you not?"

"Yes, father, but I have since presented one of the girls with one."

"And the children never go to school?"

"No; John has a way of his own, and prefers instructing them himself; he says they learn too much at public schools."

"Too much what?"

"I do not know, father, as I have never seen Mr. Proctor yet."

"Do you know what is his business?"

"Yes, he is a machinist and an employee in the establishment of Mr. Barnes."

"Oh! Mr. Rufus Barnes; why, he and his family are members of our church. Now, Olive, I wish to know if



you or sister Slocum have either of you ever heard the Bible spoken of with disrespect, while you were at Proctors."

"Not exactly," said Olive, smiling, "but I have heard observations made about the disreputable characters that it sustains, and the absurd stories therein related."

"Was this before or since you gave the Bible to them?"

"It was since. You see Miss Fanny was a stranger to the whole contents and so commenced reading it carefully and critically, and asked so many questions and explanations, that neither Mrs. Slocum nor myself could answer the half of them satisfactorily; and yesterday she wanted to return the book as immoral and unfit to be read."

"Well, brother Slocum, I must visit this family myself," said Mr. Newton, as Olive left the room; "I have never yet met with a single *real* Infidel, open and acknowledged, so that all the world knew him for what he was. I've read Infidel books—at least, Tom Paine's—and it was rather a hard pill to swallow, but I don't think this man Proctor can get the upper hands of me in an argument on the Bible."

Then he and the deacon had a long conversation about having Mr. Proctor turned out of his position, and a brother Nicholas, who had been out of a place, given his situation. "For," says the deacon, "we must look out for our own; you know the sacred scriptures say that a man who does not provide for his family is *worse* than an Infidel, and is not the church a family, and are not we officers its parents, and responsible for the welfare of its members?" and the deacon arose, much relieved in mind, and took his departure.

In the afternoon the Rev. Dr. Newton started on his trip for Proctor's. He had no difficulty in finding the place, for he had heard such a vivid description of the little cottage and its beautiful yard and garden, that he knew it at once. As he drew near the house he heard a loud bass voice accompanied by several female voices and the sound of an organ; and, pausing to listen, heard them singing one of our national airs. As the tune closed, he rapped at the door and was met by Mrs. Proctor, knitting in hand as usual. He inquired if Mr. Proctor lived there, and she answered that he did, and invited him into the little parlor. The family withdrew leaving the two men by themselves. Mr.

Newton then turned to Mr. Proctor and handed him his card saying, "I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Proctor—have I not?"

"That is my name," said Proctor smiling with friendly cordiality upon his visitor.

"I am afraid," said the Doctor, "that I have intruded upon your company."

"O, no, sir: it was only my own family. We devote one evening a week to music and singing, and this is our regular evening for it. I think all families should have certain times for amusements, and enjoy their play hours as regularly as their work hours."

To this his reverence could make no reply save that music was innocent and instructive.

"Yes," replied John; "I always endeavor to have instruction and amusement go hand in hand—to use a plain expression—it is like spice in the pudding, and helps the young to take in knowledge with a true relish and ask for more."

This observation caused a sober smile to creep over the face of his reverence, but he was too intent upon the object of his visit to discuss other matters, and he therefore tried to turn the conversation into the channel he desired by saying to Mr. Proctor that he had heard that he never sent his children to school and asked him how it was.

"Well," was the reply, "I do not care to have any one do for me and my children anything we can do ourselves. I enjoy building up their minds, and training their young intellects, too well to intrust it to the care of others, as long as I am competent to attend to it myself, and thus far I have found no difficulty at all."

"But, Mr. Proctor, there are so many children brought up in ignorance, that we ought to patronize schools for example's sake."

"Yes, but it is to guard my children *from* example that I try to teach them myself. Schools are useful for parents who cannot, or will not, teach their children at home."

"But why do you object so much to schools, Mr. Proctor?"

"Because the teachers, the books, and the whole routine are generally sectarian in character."

"Why how can that be, said Mr. Newton, "true our schools open with prayer and reading of the Testament, and often singing of a hymn, but the books are all *Union*, and no one sect is more favored than another."

"That is a mistake, Mr. Newton," said Mr. Proctor, smiling. "How about the Catholics? is not your Bible sectarian for them? And those Chinese families; do they believe in your Bible, prayers, and hymns? And the Jews, and the Quakers, and the Infidels?"

"Yes, but this is a *Christian* country, Mr. Proctor; and besides all the rest, you know it is only where the Cross is worshiped that arts, science, knowledge, and refinement flourish."

"All bosh and nonsense, sir, if I may be allowed the expression. It were as well to say that civilization is the result of wearing high-heeled shoes, big bustles, or mammoth waterfalls, because these are found where it most flourishes. Large rivers do not run by big cities as a result of the city; but the city is there because the river has created a demand for it. Civilization created a demand for a better religion than paganism was, and so the priests went to work and built up a new structure out of the best elements they could select from the old superstitions, but it would not go down with the masses because it was *new* and they could not understand it; and besides they clung with tenacious love to the religion of their fathers; and so the priests had to engraft on the *new* the forms and ceremonies of the old, and this makes the present medley of good and evil in Christianity, which is only adulterated paganism; and though much of it is bettered, very much of it is really made worse by the new mixture; especially that which demands *law*, *force*, and *compulsion* in its propagation."

"I am truly sorry, Mr. Proctor, to hear you make such observations about our holy religion. The Bible is God's word, and should be the first book everywhere."

"Well I should be truly sorry to have my children believe a good God could ever write such a book as that. So

silly, childish, ridiculous, false, wicked, vile, obscene, and blasphemous."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" said Mr. Newton, almost gasping for breath. "how terribly you do talk; you can't prove any of those assertions."

"Yes I can prove the book to be each thing that I have called it, and from its own words too. Shall I commence with 'silly,' for instance?"

"No! no! no! I haven't time now," said the Doctor, shivering with the intensity of his feelings."

At this Mr. Proctor rose from his seat and produced a small globe, a powerful microscope, and a few specimens of rock, coal, and chalk, which he placed before him on the table, while he handed Mr. Newton the Bible Olive had given to Fanny, and then said: "Now, sir, geography, the microscope, and the telescope will make Infidels of all who study them with a determination to know the real truth; these are *mine*, the book is *thine*; and I am now ready to prove the false statements of the Bible, and the truths of science, against all the religions of the world."

Frightened by this bold proposition Mr. Newton seized his hat and declared he must go as he had an appointment that must be met.

"Well, Doctor," said Mr. Proctor, laughing, "come again when you *do* have time, and we will talk these things all over to our satisfaction and settle the whole question."

"Good-bye, good-bye, sir; and may God have mercy on you," was all the Doctor said as he hurried down the garden walk; and if he did not shake the dust off his feet he did give the little gate a pious bang as he closed it behind him on his exit.

## CHAPTER V.

DEACON SLOCUM returned home chuckling with satisfaction at the result of his visit to the parsonage. He had, as he congratulated himself, killed three birds with one stone. In the first place, he had acquainted his Reverence with the rebellious and sinful spirit manifested by Mrs. Slocum, for which, he had no doubt, she would be called to account and severely admonished by him in private and consequently humbled in spirit and made subservient to him, her lawful lord and master. In the second place, he had enlisted the sympathies of the parson in behalf of his friend Nicholas, "and," said he, "shall I not be doing the church, and God himself, service by having the wicked sinner, Mr. Proctor, discharged by his employers and a good, pious member placed in his situation?"

When he got home he found Mrs. Slocum attentively reading the Bible, but as that was nothing unusual, and recollecting the manner in which they had parted, he was silent, leaving matters to take their course.

The next day Olive came over to see Mrs. Slocum and tell her of the interview at the parsonage and her own examination in reference to the Proctors; but she knew nothing about the affair of Nicholas, or what the Deacon had said about Abby's infidelity; but the ladies felt that there was something brewing that boded no good to their friends on Rosemary Hill.

"As you came in, Olive, I was reading the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew, where it says Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and went and hanged himself; while in the first chapter of Acts it says he fell headlong and burst asunder and all his bowels gushed out. I don't see why I never noticed this before, but anyhow, I know it is impossible that both stories should be true, and

How do I know which, if either, is true? I am astounded to find how blind I have been all my life concerning this book. To think that I have so revered such a volume of absurdities as I find it to be when viewed in the light of reason, and if I reason over one book, why not over another?"

"That's so, Abby," said Olive; "I was thinking as I came along that if its stories had been ten times more absurd and impossible people would have believed them all the same and said it was wrong to try to prove them or account for them on scientific and natural principles. You see a child can be made to believe anything you tell it, and people are told when young that the Bible is true and they dare not think otherwise, and seldom care to think much about it anyway. I am very uneasy as to how I shall let my father know of this change in my views. It will be a hard stroke for him; he will not allow me to talk or even think differently from himself on any question. He is so set in his way that I could never hope to alter him, and he will strain every nerve to bend me back again into his ways of thinking. I do not like to grieve him, for he is my father, and has done the best he could for me; but truth is higher than all else, and I must be just to its demands though the heavens fall. I cannot be a hypocrite, even though I lose the last friend I have in life."

"But you will not lose *all*, Olive; you will have *me*, and we shall have the Proctors."

"Yes, I know that, but just think what it will be to have all this come up in church, and all my young companions turning from me in scorn. I gave up my Sabbath-school class last Sunday on the plea that I did not feel qualified to retain it, for I cannot teach what I do not believe myself, nor do I wish to be responsible for perpetuating error by engrafting it on the minds of the young. But I cannot help rejoicing that I am no longer blind, and that I see all things in a new light and that I am free to think outside of a certain creed doctrine or church. A strength seems rising up within me that will enable me to surmount all difficulties and go on my way rejoicing."

Reverend Dr. Newton went home bitterly incensed

against Mr. Proctor. He felt that he had been beaten, completely used up, and before he could arm himself for defence his arms had been taken from him by the cool philosophy of his adversary, and no good qualities that John possessed—and he was forced to own that he was a good father, husband, neighbor, citizen, and workman—weighed as a feather in his favor with him; and severe were the anathemas the good(?) Doctor showered upon his devoted head.

“He, an Infidel, an unbeliever in God’s holy word, and to dare meet me—who have labored for thirty years in the cause of Christ, and him crucified—with a piece of rock, to prove that I am a fraud and the blessed word of God a lie.” Thus cogitating he arrived at his door, and going in, lost no time in informing Olive of his visit, and commenting severely upon Mr. Proctor’s Infidelity, and in a commanding voice forbade her visiting there again. He told her that it was dangerous for a Christian to listen to a cursed philosophy which quotes so glibly but hides a cloven foot.

“But, father, we ought to be civil to all men, let them be Christian, Mohammedan, or Pagan.”

“True, Olive, but Infidels have no rights that Christians are bound to respect; they are worse than heathens, and are an abomination in the land.”

“But, father, some of our best men have been called Infidels. Galileo, Newton, Calvin, Fox, and many others; aye, even Christ himself was Infidel to the prevailing religions of his day.”

“What! what! Infidelity here, right under my own roof? Is it possible that a serpent has been able to creep into my own house and there find another Eve? Oh, God send thy Cherubim with their flaming swords to guard my home! Oh, can it be that my own flesh and blood is Infidel too? Mine! When I have labored in the vineyard in season and out of season, till my raven locks are grey with age, and my frame feeble and tottering? Are briars and thorns springing up at this late season in my own vineyard when I thought never a seed had had a chance to be sown?”

Olive stole from the room till her father had time to “cool off,” as the saying is. She was sorry to grieve him, and really pitied him for his blind bigotry, but could she blame

herself? No, she was only doing what conscience demanded of her. She wept for her father's sorrow, but for herself she had no tears. "Martyrs have suffered in all ages for what they deemed to be truth; shall I not suffer for *my truths* also?" said she to herself. "I know that it is for the good of all coming generations that error and ignorance be supplanted by truth and wisdom, and if I can add *my mite* to the right shall I draw back because of a few stumbling-blocks that are in my way?"

All at once it seemed as if a voice said to her, "Be just. Be true. Be of good cheer; take reason for thy guide and fear not," and she sank to sleep, and, in the arms of Morpheus, forgot all her troubles.

As she entered the breakfast-room she found the family seated at table, and company also present, but it was not a cheerful family circle. Mr. Newton looked serious and angry. Olive felt as if she were judged a culprit, and Mrs. Humphries, the housekeeper, looked from one to the other with mysterious glances, as if she felt a storm brewing.

Olive went to her room murmuring, "Be just; be true. Yes, yes, I will," said she, "but how can I be of good cheer when my best friend, my father, turns from me?"

At ten o'clock she received a message to join her father in the library. It went to her heart like the point of an arrow, but bravely whispering to herself, "Be just; be true," she obeyed the summons. As she entered the library her father sat leaning back in his chair, looking very grave and thoughtful, and nervous, too, withal. In a cold, austere manner he bade her be seated and asked her why she had absented herself from morning prayers.

"My honored father," said Olive, in a trembling voice, "I beg that you will not force me to reply to your question."

"Olive, is it not my duty as a parent to look after your welfare?"

"Yes, father—under certain circumstances and restrictions."

"'Circumstances and restrictions!' what do you mean, Olive?"



"I mean, father, that there is a time in life when parents' will should not be absolute."

"Oh! I see, miss; because you are turned twenty you think you have a right to do as you please; to neglect the means of grace, and unite yourself with a lot of Infidels of the blackest die; and who knows what next? Perhaps you have already become like those Proctors—to deny the existence of the God who made you?"

"I believe in a power or principle that sits on reason's throne, whose sceptre is justice and truth, and that there is a potency in matter which continually forms and creates new existences, new identities, new worlds, suns and stars, and unmakes the old, all with one impulse, fiat or decree, as you may call it, or more properly perhaps, necessity—cause and effect. Call this God if you will; names are of little moment except as we associate ideas with them. This new God that I have found has no 'chosen people' to reward, no enemies to punish, nor is he ever angry or revengeful. An angry God, who would sacrifice his own son to appease his wrath against creatures of his own making, is no longer a God that *I* can love and worship."

"And so you have manufactured one to suit your own fancy, for your own accommodation and that of your friends, the Proctors! Do you recollect what the Bible says: 'Thou shalt have no other Gods before me'?"

"Yes, father, and that proves that there were other Gods besides the Jewish God, and that this God was very jealous and covetous. He thought those rival Gods were great, powerful and attractive, and might perhaps 'cut him out' with his chosen people if he allowed them to associate with them. He was like a very selfish lover who would have all or none. Now, if the Jews were not satisfied with those old Gods, and manufactured for themselves a better one, why may not *I* do the same? This god-making has been a world-wide and lucrative business. I saw a little rhyme once running thus:—

'There are gods of wood and gods of stone;  
Gods of iv'ry and gods of bone.  
There are gods of iron and gods of brass;  
Gods of porcelain and gods of glass.  
Some gods have fins and some have scales;

Some gods have horns and some have tails.  
Some gods drink wine, some feed on grass:  
Some gods ride clouds, and some an ass.  
But all the god I wish to see  
Is matter with its potency.' "

"Hush, hush! Olive; you talk blasphemously, and I will not hear it," said the deacon sternly.

"No, father, I simply speak facts and truth. It is the god-makers who blaspheme, by attributing such ridiculous, wicked, absurd, nonsensical qualities to their gods, and then put such silly twaddle in their mouths as the Bible contains.

"Why, father, you know that even now people are so dissatisfied with our Bible that a committee is busy revising it, fixing up God's word so as to make it more palatable, and they are said to have found over 100,000 errors in it; true, it has stood ever since King James' translation without revising, but the intelligent class of people have been far from satisfied with it, and hundreds seldom read the Old Testament at all, and if they could would expunge a great deal of the New. These revisers will not accomplish much, for they dare not correct or alter anything important, for that, you see, might upset the whole thing. I saw a few true corrections, the other day. In the very first verse of only ten words there were eight whole errors of translation. Instead of 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' it really reads, 'On primal matter gods were working at the heavens and at the earth,' which is really an improvement, for you see they did not have to begin at a beginning nor create a world out of nothing; and, besides, it was not one poor lonely old bachelor-god working by himself, but a whole legion of gods, male and female—doubtless—working in a big, lively, cheerful 'bee,' and consulting together as to ways and means, and having a nice time in general. The next verse instead of 'without form,' says 'chaotic and crude,' which is much more philosophical; for nothing can be 'without form.' Then there's that sentence old Elder Jones is so fond of quoting: 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' In Hebrew it reads: 'Says Nabul in his heart, The gods are nothing.' Now if these

revisors could only be free to translate it as it really is, they would do a valuable work, because it would alter the old book so that it would be hardly recognizable, and that would destroy its sanctity and holiness and reduce it to a level with last year's almanac. Mr. Proctor says truth is one and unchangeable; yet I've heard you remark yourself that the sermons you preached thirty years ago would not be acceptable now, or the prayers you then prayed. I remember, too, that you used to keep a lump of rock salt as a barometer to indicate changes in the weather, and that you would pray for rain or clear weather as the condition of the salt indicated either, thus proving that the *effectual* prayers of righteousness avail much," said Olive, laughing.

But this last hit at his own tricks was too much for the doctor. He arose from his seat fairly trembling with anger, and sternly ordered his daughter to go to her room and not leave the house till he gave her permission.

"Father," said Olive, "I submit to you in all things reasonable, for I owe you duty as long as I remain under your roof, and it is a pleasure to me to obey you as long as you require nothing that is against my conscience. If truth needs one more martyr, I am ready. The world moves, and *will* move, in spite of all that bigotry or intolerance can do to hinder." Thus saying, Olive left the room, while her father stood gazing after her, in a bewilderment of anger, passion, wonder, and incredulous amazement.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ONE morning as Mr. Barnes was almost ready to go to his counting-room he saw from his bay-window the Rev. Adolphus Newton coming up the gravel walk in front of his residence.

"I wonder what's up," thought he, "that the parson is making me a call so early this morning. Wants money for something, I suppose. Good morning, Mr. Newton, I am happy to see you."

"Good morning, Mr. Barnes, and how is your health and that of your family?"

"All well, thank you; pray take a seat." And they sat and talked awhile about indifferent matters, but Mr. Barnes noticed a sort of nervousness and hesitation about his visitor that he could not account for. He seemed as much embarrassed as if he were in the midst of his sermon and had forgotten his text. Mr. Barnes, though a church-member, was not one of the canting, whining, bigoted sort. He attended church now and then for change and variety, and, perhaps, for popularity, and was a generous contributor upon all occasions where money was needed, so his piety was never doubted. He was a shrewd man, too, and rather enjoyed the perplexity of the pastor, and so never made an effort to help him along, but just left him to his own resources. Mr. Newton made dive number one by remarking of the great good the Moody and Sankey revival had accomplished. Mr. Barnes nodded assent, but thought "there is more to come than that."

The success of the missionary cause was next touched upon. Mr. Barnes nodded to this, also, and thought delivery number two was drawing nearer his pocket-book; then came out the necessity of a new church on Rosemary Hill, two miles out of town.

"Another lever," thought Mr. Barnes, as he nodded assent to delivery number three.

"Then, sir, you must be aware of the rapid spread of that greatest of all evils, Infidelity, which, under the cloak of science, is spreading all over the land, causing much misery and unhappiness, breaking up family connections, producing contention in the churches, and, in fact, superseding virtue with vice, and laying snares for our young men and maidens; setting the father against the son, the mother against the daughter, and making our foes those of our own household. In fact," continued Mr. Newton, thinking of what he had lately experienced of its effects, "it is hard to tell who is not infected some way or other."

"Sorry to hear it," observed Mr. Barnes, but thought he: "is this the main shaft, or only a leader?" And again Mr. Newton spoke, growing earnest and animated as he proceeded.

"Sir, these men squeeze themselves into our factories and work-shops, and privately insinuate their diabolical principles into the minds of their fellow workmen. They never attend a place of worship from one year's end to another."

Mr. Barnes here pulled on his gloves, thinking that if the parson was sermonizing he might perhaps draw the benediction as he drew on the gloves, then he looked at his watch and Mr. Newton began to be embarrassed, and hemmed and coughed as badly as he did at first.

"Well," thought Mr. Barnes, "if he wants money, why don't he ask for it? I must make another move to hurry him up." So he took his handkerchief and drew it carefully around his hat as if to free it from dust. At this Mr. Newton stammered out that he was afraid he was detaining him too long, "but," said he, "I came on rather a delicate piece of business, Mr. Barnes. You know that during the twelve years I have occupied your pulpit everything has been agreeable, has it not?"

"I believe so," replied Mr. Barnes.

"Now I have a favor to ask of you," said Mr. Newton, "and I hope you will grant it."

"I am all attention," said Mr. Barnes, "so please proceed with your request."

"Well, I believe you have a man in your employ by the name of Proctor, who has charge of the finishing department?"

Mr. Barnes nodded assent.

"I presume you are entirely ignorant of the man's true character, or you would not suffer him to remain a day in such a respectable establishment as yours. You were not aware that he was a regular Sabbath-breaker, were you?"

"No, I was not," said Mr. Barnes.

"Nor that he neglected to send his children to school, but allowed them to range the woods, climb the mountain, or fish in the brook, as though they were wild, when they ought to be at school or attending divine service? You know, Mr. Barnes, that ignorance leads to crime and fills our prisons and poor-houses with a class who for want of education cannot read even God's holy word. It is such men as these who fill the Infidel ranks. Why, this man Proctor never had a Bible in his house till my daughter gave them one this Spring. Now, I have told you these things so that you may see how you have been imposed upon by this man in your employ. But I am afraid I am detaining you, so will ask my favor at once, and as you have a generous heart and a Christian spirit, I thank God it may meet your approbation. You perhaps are not aware that brother Nichols has been out of employment for several months, and as it is the duty of the church to provide for its members, and brother Nichols is so pious and heavenly-minded he would be an honor to your establishment, and God would prosper all your undertakings should you employ men in whom the Holy Ghost aboundeth, and brother Nichols is abundantly capable of holding the position. For two years he occupied a pulpit and was a faithful laborer in Christ's vineyard, but by too much exertion his health broke down, and we ought to aid him in obtaining a situation where he can live in comfort. Now, this Proctor, I have heard, is an Infidel, and I thank God that he has enabled me to lay this subject before you."

A few minutes of silence convinced Mr. Barnes that the pastor was safely delivered at last, and that it was now his turn to speak, and he said "I believe I understand that

you wish me to take brother Nichols into my employ and give him Mr. Proctor's place, discharging the latter entirely."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Newton, "I do. You see Infidelity is making such headway that we Christians must use every means God has given to add to his glory."

"Then you really think that by discharging Mr. Proctor and giving brother Nichols his situation you and I are instruments in God's hands to work out our own and his glory?"

"Exactly so!" exclaimed parson Newton, glad that he was apparent so well understood.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Barnes, drawing his tall form up to its full height and looking down upon the parson, who was a small man, "I have patiently heard all you have had to say, and now I hope that you and God will as patiently hear me. You wished me to understand that Mr. Proctor brought up his children in ignorance. Now, sir, his son is nineteen years of age, has been in my counting-room nearly three years, and I challenge any one to find a mistake in his books. Mr. Proctor himself came here an orphan, as an apprentice in my father's time, and for twenty-nine years he has been as faithful as my own right hand. True, his education in youth was very limited, but, sir, I myself have often puzzled for a whole week over a piece of machinery which he has been able to see through and set in order in a few hours. He is a man who does not talk much during work hours, but whenever I have had occasion to ask his advice in matters of business, I assure you I have found his head level. As to his religion, I have heard him say myself that it was to do good for himself and his fellow men, and as this is a free country, I don't see how I can interfere between God and another man's conscience as long as his life is in the right. Now you know the Bible says God will never deny those who call upon him in the hour of need and put their trust in him. Remember how he rewarded his servant Job; remember the widow's meal and cruise of oil. His ways are not our ways, and I have faith that in his good time he will reward brother Nichols with a far better situation than I can give, as he has promised and

is abundantly able. I forgot to tell you that on the first of next month Mr. Proctor will take charge of the whole business at a greatly advanced salary.

"Oh, dear! I am really sorry for that," said Mr. Newton, "it will so puff up his Infidel pride."

"But, brother Newton, the Bible says 'the laborer is worthy of his hire,' and how can I steal from my employes, as I should be doing if I did not pay him a just recompense—and so I have promoted him. I can't take that back either. So you see how helpless I am," said Mr. Barnes, with an odd, comical, quizzing smile.

It was his reverence's turn to look at his watch and draw on his gloves.



## CHAPTER VI.

MRS. ABBY SLOCUM now became a devout worshiper at the shrine of Reason. She consulted it as her oracle in all matters pertaining to the moral, physical, and spiritual world (mental, she had begun to call it,) just as she had heretofore done in cooking a dinner or buying a new hat. She felt her charity for those who could not see as she saw begin to widen out and cover up the frailties and weaknesses of those around her as she realized that they were all victims of circumstances—made what they were by organization, education, and environments. As for Jacob, her husband, she thought it her duty to bear with his oddities and superstitious notions as far as she could consistently with her love of truth and right. She felt her soul swell with pity and sorrow for his ignorance and blind credulity, and longed to bring him out into the light of reason; but he refused to listen to her pleadings, and grew more and more morose and exacting, and more ceremonious in the performance of his religious devotions than formerly. She knew this was put on for her special annoyance, and could not help loathing the cant, hypocrisy, and deceit which was so plainly manifested by him. She tried to be charitable and look down in kindness from the lofty pinnacle of truth, on which she now stood, and hoped time would soften the rigor of his faith.

But a crisis was at hand. Monthly-meeting was drawing near, and the ministration of the sacrament, and he insisted that Abby should go. She firmly but kindly refused, saying it was all a mockery now to her, and she could not countenance it by her presence.

"Well," said the Deacon, in wrath, "go to the dickens if you will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," and he seized his hat and went and told Dr. Newton

and a few friends how matters stood, and proposed that his reverence should visit her and endeavor to bring her back into the fold of Christ. Then he returned home, and, in an insulting tone, told Abby what he had done, and that a committee would soon visit her; and also boasted that he had the sympathy of the whole church.

"Well, Jacob," said she, "it seems that you are determined I shall be dragooned into bending my knee to your God whether I believe in such a being or not, but you will see that it is impossible to force my conscience. In all things reasonable, I am willing to obey you, not because it is a wife's place to obey, for I have learned better than that, but because I prefer peace, love, and harmony to discord and dissension; and it is a pleasure to me to yield my will to any one I love, when I can do so consistently with my duty to myself and to others."

"Hum, hum! perhaps you had better wear the pants and be head of the house, and let me go and cook, scour, and scrub, hadn't you?"

"And why may I not be one head, or half the head?" said Abby, raising her tall form to its utmost height and looking down upon her rather diminutive would-be lord and master. "Every house should have a man and woman as equal partners in all things, and neither should ask any duty, submission, favor, or right, that they would not freely grant to the other; and if there be children, they too have rights that should be carefully respected."

"And all this you have learned of those abominable Proctors, have you?"

"Much of it I have, and of the books they have kindly lent me; but my own reason, which has so long been crushed by the infatuated love I held for a false mythology has become thoroughly emancipated, and everything wears a new face to me now. I see things so clearly that once appeared hidden mysteries," said Abby, earnestly, "and I do hope, Jacob, you, too, will some day go hand in hand with me in the pleasant paths of true knowledge and real facts."

In the evening the Rev. Dr. Newton and four other prominent members of the church made their appearance at Dea-

con Slocum's house. Abby met them with a smile, shook them all cordially by the hand and inquired after the health of themselves and families, in a modest, courteous manner, then handed a letter to Dr. Newton, which he opened and read in silence, while his companions gazed at Abby, scrutinizing her from head to foot, as they would a criminal at the bar who had committed some heinous offense. As he finished reading the letter, Mr. Newton said gravely, "Let us pray!" and they all knelt, while he poured out his soul in earnest pleading, that his God would listen and hear his appeal for one who was straying from the fold. Two of the others also offered up petitions suitable for the occasion.

Mrs. Slocum never bent her knee nor bowed her head, but sat quietly in her chair, while now and then an involuntary smile played over her features at the thought of these "wise men of God" wrestling with him in her behalf, while he either remained deaf to their entreaties or would not interfere to assist them in their good (?) work. She could not feel the least impression or influence upon her during the whole "pow-wow," as it seemed to her in the light of her new philosophy. She thought of the "medicine men" of the poor Indians, and the incantations of some old witch who pretends to consult the invisible when wishing to tell fortunes; and she fancied the ignorant dupes before her were just as much under the influence of blind superstition as either of those.

After prayers Mr. Newton read aloud Abby's note, signifying her intention of withdrawing from the church, as she could not consistently hold communion with them any longer as a religious body, though feeling for many of the individual members the warmest love, esteem, and friendship. As the note was read, all eyes turned upon Abby who firmly but modestly met the gaze of each in an unflinching manner.

"My beloved sister," said Dr. Newton, turning to her as he concluded, "it gives me great pain to read this—your note of withdrawal from our church, from the fold of Christ and the beloved Savior's arms. I beg you will tell me what great temptation you have been subjected to, that has led you astray from the paths of duty so far as to ex-

and spurn from you a redeemer's love, and cause you to hold the blood of Christ as of no account."

"I am ready," said Abby, in a firm, yet quiet, voice, "to give an account of my stewardship. I am sorry to grieve you and all the dear friends with whom I have so long held fellowship, but my eyes are opened and I can no longer sympathize with you in belief, and only regret all the worse than wasted labor of the past years of active service in the church. If I can only live to undo what I have done toward perpetuating error and superstition I shall be truly glad."

"Oh, my sister! pray do not talk in this way. Be cool and calm, and reasonable."

"So I am, brother Newton, just as cool as I ever was in my life, and I hope *more reasonable*. But facts are stubborn things. You ask what temptation I have undergone to so change me. I will tell you. In the last church fair that was held for the honor of your God and the glory of your dear Savior, Jesus Christ, how comes it that brother Sanders donated that gold watch and yet has it in his show-case at the present time, three days after the raffle? Perhaps, as he is here, he will explain. Twice has this gold ring on my own finger gone to swell the lottery prizes, but you see it here in my possession still. And Mrs. Morse, I think, has had hers put in and raffled off four times, and wears it yet. It is said the mysteries of godliness are past finding out. Ten cent jewelry is all-sufficient in a church lottery if you only have a few genuine articles thrown in, borrowed for the occasion! It is but three years since Miss Florence lost a valuable set of jewelry by the ticket being put into the bag by mistake. Can you wonder that sister Slocum has been tempted to doubt the genuineness of religion which descends to such fraud and deception for its support? And to all this my eyes have been opened by the questions of a little girl not yet thirteen years of age, but whose mind has never been corrupted as mine has been by being taught fables and legends as facts and real history. Taught that a Joshua could stop the sun and moon in their courses so as to give a longer space of daylight in which to murder a few more of his fellow beings; make a few more widows and

orphans who should mourn and weep and suffer and die for lack of nourishment and subsistence. Nor was she taught that

'Endor's Witch could raise the dead  
And make heroic Saul afraid;  
Or that Babylon's king with pride so full,  
Became at length a sturdy bull,  
And thus for seven long years remained,  
Ere he his former shape regained.'

"I tell you, brethren, reason and common sense are more powerful deities than all the Gods and Christs that have ever been worshiped since man has inhabited the earth. How many prayers, think you, would be required to induce any one of your gods to bestow upon the race a blessing equal to that sewing-machine; or even a simple clothes-wringer?" This question was too much for his reverence, and he took out his watch and observed that he had an appointment.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**A letter from Olive Newton to Susan Proctor.**

*My Dear Friend Susan:* You will doubtless be surprised that I have not been to see you of late, but I have to tell you that I have been a prisoner in my own room for the last nine days. I have the freedom of the house when father is away, but when he is at home I retire to my room, as he has so commanded. But please do not think I am suffering very much from the confinement, for I have books, music, and my needle-work, and time to commune in quiet with my own reason. Day by day I explore the vast fields of thought and return laden with immortal trophies of scientific facts, from which I draw logical conclusions that confirm me more and more strongly in the stand I have taken for *Truth* and *Reason*. Sometimes as a new and glorious thought comes to illumine my mind, I fall into an ecstasy of happiness and rejoice with a joy far exceeding any I ever experienced at any revival or camp-meeting I ever attended. So you see, I am far from miserable, though I do miss all my dear friends at Rosemary Hill, and my girl companions of this place so much. But I busy myself day by day in collecting and arranging facts, studying my Bible in search of what is *really in it*, and thinking what I can do to lead others to the way of truth. I see, since I am a victim myself, how vain it is to persecute or prosecute for opinion's sake. The mind is a kingdom in itself and full of resources for the philosophical thinker, no matter where his lot may be cast. Reason can illuminate the darkest dungeon that bigotry or fanaticism can invent. O, Susan! when I look back to my condition before I saw you, I rejoice at the fate that directed my steps to your cottage and gave me the precious boon of your friendship and society. The simple but adamant facts fell from your lips like drops of dew from the buds of reason upon my darkened and self-blinded soul! O, how supremely abashed I felt when your little sister Fanny, in child-like innocence asked me for an explanation upon certain points in that Bible which I had given to her. How embarrassed and confounded I felt, that I, a Sabbath-school teacher, and a clergyman's daughter, educated expressly in all Christian doctrines, could not answer the very first question that a neophyte would in all cases be apt to ask—that is, “how Adam could sin when he knew not

right from wrong nor good from evil?" Commencing thus at first principles, the child undermined the very corner stone of all our Christian institutions, including the rock on which St. Peter stood. It is a text not to be explained away except at the sacrifice of reason and common sense. And they two are now my guides in all things, and to them I refer all questions. I am very happy, my dear Susan, in spite of my imprisonment, so do not grieve or trouble about me. I am forbidden to hold communication with any one by letter or personal interview, but I think I am old enough to know what is best for myself, so venture to disobey the unjust command, and send you this letter by Mr. Black, our milk-man, who will bring me your answer, should you write me, and I know your kind heart so well that I am confident of a speedy reply. My seclusion has one blessing in it, it gives me more leisure to work out my own salvation from error and delusion, and will enable me the better to emerge into the light and gaze of a bigoted world, with broader, more refined, and better cultivated views and opinions than ever before. Please tell Mrs. Slocum, when you see her, how I am situated, and give her my kindest love. My love to your father and mother, also, and to all the family, especially Fanny.

Your true and sincere friend,

OLIVE NEWTON.

A letter from Susan in reply.

*My Dear Olive:* Your letter was a great surprise to us all, and we truly sympathize with you in your trouble. I know too well how your loving heart must be wrung at the thought of your father's stern displeasure and his firm determination to force you to believe, see, and think as he does; and the persecution he has subjected you to. My father thought at first that he would call together a few friends and have your case brought before the court; but on more mature consideration it was thought better to await further developments, as you seemed so resigned to your situation, and even happy amid it all. To-morrow I will try and see Mrs. Slocum and consult with her as to what she thinks best to be done. Remember that father and our whole family are at your service and command, and will gladly do anything you require to relieve the monotony of your imprisonment. I send you with this father's choice of all books, as an eye-opener in regard to the lies and frauds, deceit and treachery, which abounded in the early days of Christianity. I don't see how any one can read it and ever again have a morsel of faith in the Christian mythology. "Taylor's Diegeses" has proved the salvation of hundreds and thousands from the superstitious dogmas which the priesthood would fain force upon their belief. It goes to the very groundwork of the existence of Christianity, and *destroys it all*, leaving not a pin's point upon which

to build it up again. May it relieve the tedium of many a lonely hour, and prove a ray of light to illumine your solitary and silent sanctuary of thoughtful quietude. You are not cut off from the world, dear Olive, for we shall always find means to communicate with you. Harry sends you the enclosed note, and we all join in love to you, and hope you will garner up, in your solitude, bright gems of reason which will give light to nations yet unborn.

Yours, in love and sympathy, SUSAN PROCTOR.

Harry's note ran as follows:—

*Miss Newton:* You will pardon a stranger for addressing you, but I have heard so much of you from mother and my sisters, and have looked so often at your photograph in Fanny's album, that I feel like an old acquaintance of yours, but had you not been in trouble, I doubt whether I should have obtruded myself upon your notice, for a time at least, but "a friend in need is a friend indeed," and I do want to be your friend, Miss Newton, and share with my mother and sisters the pleasure of lightening your hours of solitude by, at least now and then, a friendly word. I rejoice that you have learned to think for yourself—to listen to reason rather than to traditions, creeds, and dogmas. I know it is not easy to stem the tide of popular prejudice, especially where, as in your case, all the friends and associates of your girlhood will stand aloof from you; but it is better to be in the right with two or three than to follow the many into paths of error. Be brave, then, and true to your own convictions, and leave all else to shape their own results. Yours respectfully, HARRY PROCTOR.

Olive was a proud and happy girl when she read these letters, and she felt her heart swell with courage and hope. She knew she had warm, sympathizing friends, and no longer felt alone. She knew that their thoughts were with her, and that she should find her solitude cheered by many a welcome missive of remembrance and encouragement from her friends of Rosemary Hill; and with the precious tokens of friendship clasped to her heart she sank to sleep that night with a feeling of pure, sweet contentment and holy resignation.

Early in the morning Susan was on her way to the city, and in due time arrived at Deacon Slocum's. The first greetings of welcome over, Susan turned to Mrs. Slocum and said:—

"I am glad to find you at home this morning, my friend."



"Home! home! It is a word too sacred to apply to this, my present abiding-place."

"Why, Abby, you surprise me," said Susan, opening wide her eyes in astonishment, "I'm sure you have a pleasant place here, and all that heart need require."

"Yes, I have worldly comforts, as they are called, but that does not make home."

'Home is not merely four square walls  
With pictures hung and gilded;  
Home is where affection calls,  
In shrines the heart has builded.'

You don't know, Susan, what a life I have led since we last met. Not a kind word nor loving glance has the Deacon vouchsafed me. I've been prayed at, read at, talked at, and looked at with looks that would have withered and blasted, were it possible for looks to do so. Not satisfied with all this, Jacob brought Dr. Newton and several members of the church to examine and admonish me for not submitting to wear a hood of deception, and to aid in keeping out of sight the sins, shortcomings, and iniquities of the church, and build up yet stronger its reason-dethroning walls. I told the committee quite plainly that my eyes were opened and I was determined to be free, and no power could hinder me from giving my real sentiments to the world. I told them, too, of many of their own little sins that had come to my notice; how Rev. Mr. Smooth-tongue, one of their big guns, was riding along the road, last week, just beyond here, when I was picking berries over the fence, and as he passed me, his horse shied at a bit of paper in the road, and the pious hypocrite commenced swearing roundly at the beast, and his wife tried to hush him up, saying some one would hear him. Thinks I to myself, 'ah! you don't care if your God does hear so long as your dupes think you all right.\*' I tell you, Susan, I wonder more and more how I could have been so blind as not to have seen through things before. I told one of the committee about a young girl he had sent off into the country to become a mother, and that he had since been in the habit of sending her quarterly installments of money for herself and child 'and,' said I, 'it is well known to me

\*A fact.

who is the father of that child, too.' Ah! Susan, that was a thunderbolt among them. The guilty man pretended to be very ignorant about it all then, but the next day he called on me and inquired what I meant. Said I, looking sternly at him, 'You know well enough what I mean, sir. That girl is my brother's wife's niece, and I know all her pitiful story; how you persuaded, coaxed, bribed, and caajoled her into your power when she was only fifteen years old, while your wife was lying dangerously ill of typhoid fever. I haven't lived all these years in this community as a prominent church member without learning a great many items of the private history of you all; but I have hitherto smothered these things up for the good of the church; and had you quietly accepted my letter of withdrawal, and treated me as a lady should be treated, I should have left all to your own consciences.' He plead with me not to expose him publicly for his wife's and children's sake, and seemed so humble and contrite that I promised to be quiet unless further developments forced me to speak. You see a church is like an individual, it keeps its own secrets of corruption and wickedness concealed from outward observation as much as possible. 'Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the steets of Askalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice' has ever been its motto. A church is like a corporation—it has no soul, but acts as a screen to hide many a crime and sin of wrong-doing. I could tell you how half of the missionary funds and Bible funds, and other collections are disposed of, too, if I had time. Yes, yes; even Jacob Slocum would have to pay more attention to his last end and lapstone were it not for the help he gets in this way. And several others I could name are benefited by those contributions, often begged from the poor and needy, and the fatherless orphan children, whose sympathies are so easily worked upon by tales of suffering heathen. Miss Olive, too, will tell you the same, for she and I have worked together so long that there are few secrets between us."

"Olive? yes, Abby; and do you know where Olive is?"

"No. I was just going to ask you if you had seen her lately. There is some mystery about her. I understand no one has seen her for a fortnight. Miss Bramleigh called the

other day, but the Doctor told her she could not see her, and others have met with the same refusal. The house-keeper is mum, and there is great wonder and agitation in the church; for Olive was a general favorite. Her Sunday-school sent her a petition to come and resume her place as teacher, as they have never had one they liked so well as her; but the paper was not allowed to reach her, and was returned unopened. Some think she has left town, but I am sure she would not have left without seeing me. I believe Jacob knows something about it, by the hints and sarcasms he throws at me about her and our friendship and our clinging together for the purpose of advancing Infidelity and putting down Christianity."

"Mrs. Slocum," said Susan, "I will tell you about her, but wish you would say nothing to any one at present. Here is a letter I received from her yesterday. She is imprisoned at home, as you will see by reading it."

"Imprisoned," said Abby, in astonishment, "Is it possible!" and she took the letter, reading it slowly and carefully to the end. Then, clasping her hands together, she heaved a glad sigh of contentment and resignation.

"Why, Abby," said Susan, "you seem rather rejoiced at the misfortune of your friend. How is this?"

"Not rejoiced at the misfortune, Susan, but glad that she is willing to hold fast to the truth, even though it leads her into trial, trouble, and difficulty—glad that she is so true, so strong, and so unflinching in her determination to be her own mistress in matters of belief. Brave Olive! I rejoice that you have unfurled the banner of truth and righteousness in the very camp of deceit and hypocrisy! With truth and reason as thy weapons, thou wilt surely prevail."

While Susan and Abby were thus consulting together, where was Jacob? Was he busy plying his avocation with last and lapstone? No; not he. He had got a terrible wicked idea into his head, and was plotting with himself as to how he could carry it out; and at last he took his way to Dr. Newton's to sound him as to his contemplated project; He did not dare reveal his plans all at once, but in canting, whining, sanctimonious tones he commenced talking of the untold trouble that had fallen upon them in the defection

of Mrs. Slocum and Olive from the path of Christian duty and of reverence for the church; and took special pains to bring up the scandal of the church fair and lottery intrigue and other things that Abby had thrown off upon them.

"Now, you see, Doctor," said he, in a smooth, soft, oily tone, "if these things all get out among the citizens here, they will almost ruin the church; and if Abby thinks it her duty to speak of them, all the world cannot stop her, she is so determined.

She is known far and wide, as one of the most truthful of women, so all will give credence to her testimony, let it be what it may. And Olive, too, you know, is a superior girl and has a wide circle of admiring friends. It does seem as if the Evil One himself were in our midst, thus changing two of the most influential of our members into open enemies, and he is, too, and wears the form of that hateful, impertinent, over-bearing, miserable Proctor. I can't help feeling just now as if it would do my soul good to curse him with all my might."

"Be calm, brother Slocum, I beg of you. I know your case is a hard one. The wife of your bosom to become a serpent in your home and trample on all you hold dear and sacred; but it will do no good to use bad language about it. Think you I am not sorely troubled also? My child, my Olive, whom I have loved as the apple of my eye, whom I have reared so carefully in all the ways of Christ and have been so proud of as one of the most promising of all our young members—my only and my all to love—and I have worse than lost her!"

Tears streamed down the old man's face as he spoke, and even Slocum's hard heart was moved at the father's grief; but it would not do to let this go on if he would achieve success in his designs, so he craftily and cunningly began to talk of the necessity of *doing something* at once to keep the thing secret from the world. "You know, doctor, that you have a pure and unblemished reputation, and have spent your whole life building up this church and training its members in the way they should believe. Now, if it gets out that the two best ones of your flock have been so illy taught that they could not hold their own against a sin-

ple child, what do you suppose the church will think of your work? You know, even now, some of the younger members want Mr. Bland to come and take your place, because they say he has more advanced ideas and has adopted the theory of evolution and become a Darwinian. Now, if we conservatives wish to hold our own against this progressive wing, we must be cautious and careful in all things, and not give way a single inch. Now, Doctor, I've been thinking that nothing but insanity could possibly induce a true believer in the blood of Christ to make those statements, against such pious men, which Abby made while the committee was there. Did you not observe what a wild, vindictive look she had? She has grown worse and worse since then, and I have been consulting our brother, Dr. Spring, and he is confident that she is really insane. He described to me several cases of this peculiar manifestation of the disease, and they exactly agreed with the condition of my poor wife. Poor dear! that accounts for all the hard things she has said to us all. The treasonable ideas of that Proctor family preyed upon her mind till they crazed her, and Olive, too, no doubt."

"Why, brother Slocum!" said Mr. Newton, "I do believe you are right, and that is the real cause of it all. Did he think there was any help for them?"

"Oh, yes; he said if they could be put under his care at once, before the disease resulted in entire madness, he was sure he could help them, and in time remove all traces of the disease. He has a pleasant retreat a few miles from here, where he treats a few private patients, and he will do all he can for our afflicted ones. You see that as soon as it is known that they are insane, the people will take no more notice of the things my poor wife said in her madness; but now they are creating quite an excitement in the church, and even among outsiders. You know how such things go when once they get a start."

"Well, brother Slocum, how shall we manage to get them away privately? I can't stand publicity in this thing, so it must be done secretly and quietly."

"Certainly, certainly, your Reverence," said Slocum, jubilantly, for he was rejoiced that he had so easily won the

doctor to his way of thinking. "I have thought it all over, you see, for I know that the cause of Christ or the church cannot prosper while they remain in this unfortunate state; for impious and ungodly sentiments, even though coming from the lips of insanity, will work evil, especially upon the young and unformed minds. I will send brother Spring this afternoon to visit your daughter, and he will give you a certificate of her insanity."

This settled, the deacon said solemnly, "Let us pray." And they knelt, and a blessing upon their nefarious work was craved, and thanks given to God for the way *he* had opened for them out of their difficulties; and then Jacob took his departure.

He busied himself the rest of the day in making preparations for the abduction of his own wife and the minister's daughter. He sent Dr. Spring to examine Olive, but as the malady was already described and the remedy proposed, this was soon done.

All that evening the deacon was remarkably sociable and pleasant to Abby, and things seemed as nice as they used to be when she had spent the day collecting money for the poor heathen, and he knew a great portion of it would go to line his own pockets and buy the "creature comforts" he was so fond of. Abby wondered at this sudden change in her husband, and felt some misgivings, too, about it, as she knew him too well to believe it was all sincere; but she was a philosopher and thought things might take their course, and she would accept what came and make the best of it.

In the morning the deacon was early astir, and to Abby's surprise brought in wood, and made the fire, and seemed almost officious in his desire to help her about the work. He was so excited that he even forgot to ask a blessing at table, for the first time in all his life. When handing his cup for more coffee he said, "Abby, this tastes like the coffee you used to make long ago; it is really excellent."

Abby wondered more and more at this, for it was rare indeed that the deacon ever praised her, and especially for the things she provided at table. There fault-finding was always the rule. The climax was capped when he observed: "Abby, my love, I've been pondering over some of your

remarks, and I, too, begin to have doubts as to the origin of the Bible. You know how many versions of it we have had; and the efforts now made to still further improve it. You see, Abby, if King James' version is really true—really God's holy word—how can it be improved?"

Abby said little, but was careful to attend to his wants, answering him in quiet, gentle tones, so that if he was really becoming changed and reformed, she might not discourage him. As soon as breakfast was over he went out, and, getting on his horse, rode to the insane hospital, six miles distant, to see brother Edwards, the keeper. This man was a member in good standing in the church, always ready to contribute to any fund they wished to raise, and willing also to do anything for *money* that his church desired done. Brother Slocum soon informed him how matters stood, and it was arranged that Abby and Olive should come and no visitors allowed to see them till they recovered their reason sufficiently to be able to acknowledge and appreciate the all-saving power of Christ's blood. The following evening the poor unfortunate lunatics were to be introduced to their cells and shut out from all the world save brother Edwards and Dr. Spring, who were too much interested pecuniarily to allow them a chance to obtain their liberty as long as any one chose to keep them secluded. Their friends were to think they had gone off on a journey to visit a church in an adjoining State and collect means to buy a new organ for their own.

The deacon returned home entirely satisfied with God's will and designs thus far, and his faith was strong to believe the Lord would carry the work forward to completion. "What am I," said he, "but an humble instrument in his hands to work out his own glory?" He told Dr. Spring of the arrangement he had made, bound him again to secrecy, then called at the parsonage. He found Dr. Newton much excited, as he had just had a consultation with his daughter and had failed to move her determination to listen to reason rather than fiction, fraud, and deception. This God-like man found his temper sadly irritated by Olive's resistance to his will. Yes, he was really God-like, because God's will is supreme in heaven, and as a minister is his vicege-

rent on earth, *his* word should be the law all mankind should obey. Mr. Newton had even tried to argue the subject with his daughter, and told her that she was deluded by the devil, and that if she did not at once return to her allegiance to Jesus Christ, and become again a lamb of God, she would surely be lost for ever and for ever.

"No, no, father," said Olive, "you are mistaken. You have so long thought one way that it is hard for you to look any other ; but if you will only read, talk, and think, I know you will by and by see as I do."

"God forbid ! my child," said he, with a shudder of horror. "I see hell now gaping wide to swallow you ! Repent, repent, ere it is too late !"

"Father," said Olive, solemnly yet mildly, "I can never repent of having found my reason. The fear of death, hell, and eternal black damnation with all its gloomy and appalling horrors, has faded away from my mind like dew before the rising sun, and no power in heaven or on the earth can ever resurrect the dead ashes of that past horrid belief. My soul rejoices within me that it is so, and I long so much, my dear father, for the time to come when you, too, will cease to believe, and to preach, such awful mistaken ideas as that. If there were a God, father, he would never punish us eternally for simply doubting his existence. I have been reading Ingersoll's "Oration on the Gods," the past few days, and I must confess that he has killed off the last remnant of a belief in a supreme, overruling power. Let me read you a few passages just to show how strongly he reasons. Remember, father, that I have always read all the pious books you wished me to, and now it is only simple justice that you, in turn, listen to the other side; and may be, too, you will be able to show me wherein my lately chosen authors and teachers have erred. Every sentence is so good, and so epigrammatic, that I scarcely know where to begin, but will run the book over, glancing at a few marked passages, and if you *can* contradict them, I hope you will, for I only want *truth*, and indeed should be glad to believe in immortality and future happiness if I could, and also in a *good God* who is really a father and friend, and will always guide us aright. Ingersoll com



mences his lecture by saying, 'An honest God is the noblest work of man.' And that's true, father, for men make their gods out of their highest conceptions of goodness, honesty, and all virtues and beauties. Everything they deem grandest, holiest, and best they embody in their gods; and, as Ingersoll says, 'these gods always resemble their creators'; that is, what the god-makers *would* be could they live out their best ideas. You see he thinks that instead of God creating men, men create gods."

"Well, child, it does look so if viewed in that light; but this is a subject human reason cannot understand, and Job asks a very pertinent question when he says, 'Canst thou by searching find out God?'"

"But, father, it is human nature to *search*. What would the world be if all sat down in ignorance and were content to search for no reason for the things about them? Just listen to this: 'Give me the storm and tempest of thought and action, rather than the dead calm of ignorance and faith. Banish me from Eden when you will, but first let me eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.'"

"It sounds grand, Olive, but it rankles of blasphemy, because it rebukes our God for not encouraging the prying of mankind into things his wisdom keeps hidden in mercy from them."

"But, father, you believe in education, schools, etc.; where would you have us stop?"

"When you reach the domain of faith, my child."

"Faith! yes; and what is faith? Ingersoll, in speaking of it, calls it 'That unhappy mixture of insanity and ignorance.' Then, too, he says, 'Beyond nature man can not go, even in thought; above nature he cannot rise; below nature he cannot fall.' Don't you see, then, there is no room for faith. We must all find our knowledge in nature, and not in faith or imagination. And here he also has a grand truth: 'As long as man believes the Bible to be infallible, that book is his master. The civilization of this century is not the child of faith but of unbelief—the result of Freethought. . . . The Church, with its flaming sword, still guards the hated tree, and, like its supposed founder,

curse to the lowest depth the brave thinkers who eat and become as gods.' ”

“ But, Olive, don't you see that the moment men are free to think outside of the lines the Church draws for them, they invariably think too much, and run, like yourself and this Ingersoll, right into blank Atheism ? ”

“ Well, father, if it be true that there is no God, why not accept the fact? If reason leads men inevitably to that result, it would seem that such a conclusion is the real solution of the question. It is better not to have a God than to believe in such cruel, unjust ones as men now do. It is really marvelous how people cling to this belief in wicked, revengeful gods. Here is a good passage right to the point on this subject: ‘ Strange that no one has ever been persecuted by the Church for believing God bad, while hundreds of millions have been destroyed for thinking him good. The orthodox church will never forgive the Universalists for saying God is love. . . . It is just as natural and logical to suppose that a devil would cause happiness as to suppose that a god would produce misery.’ ”

“ But, Olive, God never does produce misery ; it is the wrong-doing of men that creates misery, and it is the influence of the Evil One that causes men to do wrong ”

“ Yet, father, you say God is the author of all things, and no one can do anything without his help. Don't you see that though it is easy to say God did this, the devil did that, yet it is impossible that anything has ever taken place save by the simple rule of cause and effect ? ”

“ But, Olive, where was the *first* cause, if there was no God ? ”

“ There never was any first—never will be any last—but all is an eternal, unvarying round of events ; one great circle of causes and effects, unending and everlasting ”

“ The reasoning seems sound, Olive, but I can't understand it ; I can not see how it all can be, and no God to create it and keep it in order.”

“ But it never was created, father ; and the potencies and powers in matter cause all things and maintain perfect order, and are as they are because it is an impossibility for them to be otherwise under existing circumstances. Your

God is only a name for what your ignorance fails to comprehend, and Ingersoll says: 'We are explaining more and more every day. We are understanding more and more every day. Consequently your God is growing smaller every day.' He has got so small now that almost all doctors, lawyers, editors, philosophers, and scientists, and thinkers of all classes are puzzled to find any trace of him."

"Olive, Olive! I can't stand it to hear you talk so, nor do I want to hear any more of that blasphemous book. Why, the very stars in the heavens proclaim a God in their tones, as we watch them in their continuous journeys through space for ages upon ages, still the same, and unchangeable as his will."

"But, father, 'while the astronomer scanned the heavens, the Church branded his grand forehead with the word Infidel, and now not a glittering star in all the vast expanse bears a Christian name.'"

"But what do you Infidels propose to do, Olive, in banishing religion from the earth?"

"I answer in the words of our writer here, 'For the vagaries of the clouds we propose to substitute the realities of earth; for superstition, the splendid demonstrations and achievements of science; and for theological tyranny, the chainless liberty of thought.'"

"Well, Olive, I hope you are having a nice time with your 'liberty of thought' here by yourself; and when you get tired of thinking, and long for human sympathy and companionship just tell me you are willing to believe the holy truths I have endeavored all your life to instil into you, and you shall be restored again to your place in your home, your church, and with the associates you love—but but those Proctors; further intercourse with them must for ever cease."

"Well, father, I am ready now to believe all the *truth* you have ever taught me, but we shall differ as to what *is* truth, and I cannot consent to give up my new friends, either, for they have done nothing to forfeit my esteem, but, on the contrary, have given me back my birthright—an unfettered mind. So I decline to accept liberty on those terms, father, as much as I long for your love, good-will,

and approbation. I must wait, hoping and trusting, for a better time coming. I am glad, father, that you came, and that we have had this talk, and hope something I have said or read may yet take root in your mind and bear good fruit."

"Don't flatter yourself, Olive, with any such idea as that. My faith is too strong. It has stood the test of a long lifetime, and cannot be moved by a few words spoken by a mere girl. Good bye, Olive; I leave you alone with your God; may he open your mind to his truths!"

This conversation with Olive was rankling in Mr. Newton's mind when Jacob made his appearance and laid before him the arrangement that God had designed and made for their deliverance.

"No doubt, your Reverence," said Jacob, "these things have come upon us to try our faith. If Abaaham was called upon to sacrifice his son, why should not we be called upon to give up our choicest treasures also into his holy keeping? And shall we doubt that they will be returned to us also unharmed?"

Then Jacob withdrew, like Moses of old, up the mountain for further instruction. He wished to consult with God as to how he should proceed; and the Lord informed him of all, yea, unto the very end. So Jacob came down the mountain much refreshed, and proceeded to do the will of the Lord who spake to him on the mountain. Then he returned to his own house. And Abby, his wife, saw him rejoicing with exceeding great joy, and Jacob did that which was pleasant in the eyes of Abby his wife, as God had commanded him on the mountain, and he spake many goodly things unto her, and he told her the Church was a snare and a pit-fall, and that Christ was no better than Buddha or Mohammed. At this remark Abby looked down for a cloven foot or a footless reptile; then she looked around for an angel of light, but no supernatural appearance of any kind was visible. She smelt the air for fumes of sulphur, but no greater devil was there than Deacon Slocum, and with him she was well acquainted. But though sight or scent failed to detect the subtle presence of evil, reason told her to be on her guard, for Jacob was such an arch-

hypocrite that there was no knowing what guise he might put on.

The next morning Jacob proposed that they should visit Mr. Blackfield, who lived five miles out in the country, for so the Lord had commanded him in the mount, and he asked Abby's approval to invite Miss Newton to accompany them. Had a thunderbolt fallen, Abby would not have been more surprised. "What does it all mean?" thought she. "But I shall see Olive, and she and I will have a pleasant ride together; so if her father will let her go I will be glad."

Then she told the deacon that she would go, even as the Lord had foretold him in the mount.

"I think Abby, my dear, you had better write a note of invitation to Miss Newton," said Jacob. And so Abby wrote as follows:

MY DEAR OLIVE: Jacob and myself are going this afternoon to visit Mr. Blackfield, and should be glad to have you go along if you can. Do come! I want to see you so much, and have so much to tell you.

Your ever true friend, ABBY SLECCUM.

With the note in his possession the deacon hastened to the parsonage, and was soon seated in the library, and everything was quickly arranged, as the Lord had commanded his servant Jacob on the mount. Olive was surprised at being allowed to receive the note at all, and at Abby and Jacob being on such good terms, and at the doctor consenting to allow her to go along; but the ways of the Lord and his servants are past finding out, thought she, and tired of her confinement, and longing to see Abby, she gladly consented to go, and returned the following reply:

DEAR ABBY: I am more than glad to go with you, my friend and my second mother—dearer still since we have both been tried as by fire. I will be ready by three o'clock.

Your loving OLIVE NEWTON.

Jacob received the note from the housekeeper, and returned home full of the Holy Ghost, and he gave Olive's reply to Abby, telling her to be ready at the appointed time. Abby, still perplexed and wondering, was glad to hasten the arrangement for her ride and to see Olive. Her heart beat high with hope, and her cheek flushed, while her step

was springy and buoyant as that of a young girl. All this was observed by Deacon Slocum, but not a tender chord in his heart beat responsive to the joy he saw in the wife of his bosom. All he thought of was the safe termination of his, and the Lord's, plans. "Ha, ha," thought he, "in a few hours my pair of birdies will be safely caged in, as the Lord has spoken to me in the mount." Then he went to order a double-seated covered carriage, and all was done privately, and no one save brother Spring knew anything about it, which was as the Lord had commanded. But as he passed the jewelry establishment of brother Sanders he thought how he would rejoice to know that Abby had come to grief; it would be such a sweet morsel, as he would think of the lottery exposure.

"Yes, I'll just drop in and inform him," said the deacon to himself, for Jacob, knowing he was bent upon a foul, dastardly scheme, wanted all the encouragement he could get. So he entered the store, found Mr. Sanders busy repairing some broken jewelry, and no customers in, save a little girl who was waiting to have a ring mended. The deacon drew a stool close to Mr. Sanders, and in a low tone told him the whole story of how neatly they had managed to entrap Abby and Olive, and that at three o'clock he was to have the carriage ready, and in a few hours all would be completed and nothing now could save them from a long imprisonment.

"But," said brother Sanders, "Dr. Newton is too good a man to lend himself to such a scheme."

"Yes," said Jacob, shrugging his shoulders, "he is *good*, but you know he is easily led and persuaded, especially by those whom he thinks are working for the good of the church. Don't be afraid of him. I've got *him* all right. He thinks it is for the good of the poor demented souls that I am doing all this, ha, ha! and it will redound to the benefit of the church, any way; and if you and I get our revenge also, I'm sure it don't matter. And if it shall please God to open their blind eyes and be a means of saving their souls, to reside a few months, or even years, in a mad-house, will we not be doing God service?"

Thus parleying with his neighbor and his conscience, the

deacon departed and went on his way rejoicing. The little country girl, too, got in a hurry and said she would not wait for her ring, but would call again for it, so brother Sanders was left alone to chew the cud of his pleasant contemplations of Abby in her role of a lunatic. "I only hope she will rebel against authority," said he to himself, "so brother Edwards will have a chance to punish her a few times. I should like to know that her proud head was bent low once, so I would, the mean thing, to go and talk as she did about me."

The deacon was soon at his door with a handsome turnout from the livery stable. He gallantly helped Abby to a comfortable position in the back seat, remarking that he would yield the pleasure of her society to Olive, as he knew they two wanted a nice talk together. When they arrived at the parsonage they found Olive all ready, and as she took her seat by Abby, Dr. Newton stepped into the hall equipped for a ride also, and as he came toward the carriage, Olive said in surprise, "Why, papa, are you going, too? I'm so glad; it seems so much pleasanter when you are along." And she gave him an affectionate smile as he seated himself by the deacon.

The doctor looked sad and thoughtful, and spoke but few words to any one, for he was full of doubt as to the propriety of the contemplated step. But it was too late now to draw back. Jacob touched the horses and they went briskly on their way to the insane asylum, as the Lord had promised him on the mountain.

And that little country girl who could not wait took her way with flying feet to the manufacturing establishment of Mr. Barnes, and went to her father, John Proctor, who on hearing her story hastened to the counting-room and informed his employer, Mr. Barnes, of what was in the wind. Mr. Barnes, having been lately installed justice of the peace, proceeded to fill up a summons for the arrest of the deacon and Dr. Newton for abducting or kidnapping two citizens of the state, etc. In a few minutes John Proctor, who had just been sworn in special constable for the occasion, had the warrant in his hand for their arrest, with subpoenas for the two ladies as witnesses. Harry, too, went

along with them in Mr. Barnes' private carriage, and the very brutes seemed to know they were on an errand of mercy and justice, for they fairly flew over the ground, and arrived in sight of their goal within a mile of their destination.

Olive and Abby were surprised that the carriage did not turn into the lane that led to Eli Banfield's, and Abby asked the deacon why he drove past the house.

"Oh," said he, "you ladies are fond of flowers, and brother Edwards sent me word this morning that he had several new varieties in full bloom, and that his nursery was never in a finer condition, and if we would ride over, he would give you ladies each a nice bouquet and some choice slips and seeds. We shall not stay long, so we'll be back to Eli's in good season."

Thus quieted they rode on, but Abby was not at all satisfied, though she said nothing to Olive, wishing her to enjoy the ride, and as Dr. Newton was alone, she knew no harm could come to *her*. They reached the asylum and were soon in the reception-room; but before they could get seated the broad shoulders and manly figure of John Proctor darkened the doorway. He stepped into the room, followed by his son Harry, just as Jacob and Dr. Newton were presenting the medical certificates of Dr. Spring, vouching for the insanity of the two ladies.

"What means this?" said John Proctor, in a stern, authoritative voice. "Please let me see that paper, Mr. Edwards?"

Taken by surprise, Mr. Edwards passed the certificate to Mr. Proctor, who, on reading it, turned to Newton and Slocum, and said: "It is my duty to make to you the unpleasant announcement that you are my prisoners, and for these two ladies I have subpoenas as witnesses."

Enraged at the interruption, and maddened by being thus balked of his revenge, Deacon Slocum bawled out: "Thou infernal infidel scamp! What authority hast thou? Thou art no officer."

But Proctor calmly showed them his papers, and they saw that resistance was useless. The ladies stood like petrified statues, amazed and confounded; they wondered what



it all meant. But Proctor hurried them into the carriages, telling them there was no time now for parleying. But on the way back he unfolded to Abby and Olive the whole plot, and told them how Fanny had heard it all as she sat in the jewelry store. "And," said he, smiling, "she took the quickest way she knew of to save your tresses, as the first operation would have been to shave your heads to restore you to reason."

"But, Mr. Proctor," said Olive, "father never intended such an outrage as confining two sane women in a mad-house simply because they could no longer believe as he did—he is too just and too good and too kind."

"Ah, Olive, you don't know how bigotry and superstition can blind even good men. Your father, no doubt, was persuaded by Slocum that it would be for your real benefit to take you to the asylum for a while. You know how superstitious he is; and doubtless he thought you actually bewitched by a devil, and that the only way to restore you was to put you under the care of a man who, like Dr. Spring, understood the management of such cases. No one will blame *him*, Olive, for anything but weakness of mind and lack of judgment. Every one knows him for a good, well-meaning, honest citizen, who intends to do his duty as well as he knows how."

In the other carriage all was gloom and silence. The deacon was fuming in rage at the failure of his grand scheme, and trembling with fear as to what might be the consequence to himself. Dr. Newton was troubled, but in his heart he felt glad of the turn things were taking; for the more he thought about it the more he regretted having listened to Slocum's project.

As the carriages entered the city on their return from the asylum, they found the whole place in agitation. From the most palatial residence to the humblest cottage all was astir; and as the ladies came in view a universal shout arose from the assembled multitude.

Proctor drove directly to the court-house, where Mr. Barnes had assembled a bench of magistrates for the special occasion. Mrs. Slocum was called to the witness-stand, and in a few plain, simple, emphatic words described

the treatment to which she had been subjected by Jacob, and his perfidious hypocrisies to ensnare them. As she told of his pretending to be an Infidel, and the manner in which he had spoken of religious matters, some of his brethren in the church actually hissed him there in court, and one pious old lady whispered, loud enough to be heard all over the room, "I declar'! I would rather have an honest man like John Proctor for my friend, if he is an Infidel, than a mean, sneaking, canting hypocrite like old Slocum there!"

Miss Newton was next called, and she told her story modestly and quietly, trying to shield her father from all blame as far as possible. "Indeed," said she, her eyes streaming with tears, "he has been a kind, good father and friend to me all my life, until I found it impossible to longer think as he did upon religion. I do not blame him for aught he has done, as he really thought it for my soul's good."

Mr. Barnes inquired her age, then she was dismissed from the stand in great distress, not for herself, but for her father who had been led into such a disgraceful plot.

Proctor now handed in the certificate of Dr. Spring, and his arrest was immediately ordered, and as he was in court he was soon a prisoner, but his examination was postponed until the following day. The prisoners were put under bonds of five thousand dollars each. Mr. Barnes went bail for Dr. Newton, but public indignation ran so high that neither the Deacon nor Dr. Spring could procure bail, even in their own congregation, so they were provided with prison accommodations and left to their own unhappy thoughts.

On the trial the following day it was proved that Dr. Newton had been too much under the influence of Deacon Slocum's smooth, but deceptive tongue and on account of his implicit faith in certain texts of Scripture, and his hitherto good moral character as a Christian and a citizen, he was let off with a fine of five hundred dollars, but he felt that he could never hold up his head again as pastor of the church, so he resigned his pulpit and retired to private life.

To describe the various feelings manifested in the city after the trial is impossible, but all agreed that a grievous outrage had been committed, or all but a few devout, Puritanic, Moses-law, Bible-fanatics, who believed no means un-

just fable that could be used to put down Infidelity. The Inquisition with all its horrors was none too strong for them, nor the hottest hell that could be pictured too hot for the punishment of all who did not believe as they believed. At the other extreme there were a few isolated individuals who could not believe that man was obliged to accept doctrines which his reason told him were untrue. But those few were generally quiet and silent upon this topic, as, were it known that they favored Liberalism, they would not only be ostracised from society, but they might be turned off from their situations and their children suffer for bread. Then still there was a middle class who were not fanatical, nor were they very silent, but generally passed for good Christians, as they "went with the crowd." Born Baptists, they subscribed dutifully to that creed : born Methodists, they made good members of that excitable body ; born Quakers, they were staid, quiet, and sober, like that plain sect ; and if no church claimed them, they still united in worship with those most convenient or handy. Now this class comprised the great mass of the citizens, and amongst these the subject of Infidelity, the conversion of Olive and Abby by the Practors, and the unmasking of the corruption of the church, were freely discussed, and the religious thermometer went down several degrees in a few days, and many came out publicly and confessed that they had long doubted whether the Christian superstition was any nearer true than many of the other superstitions that prevailed in the world.

A few enterprising individuals availed themselves of this general spirit of inquiry "to strike while the iron was hot," and making up a collection among themselves, they raised funds, sent for a large package of "Truth Seeker Tracts" and similar publications, and fairly flooded the city with them. And one or two of the most jealous advocates of freedom appointed a committee of ten who were to make a run on a pious bookstore and call for Paine's "Age of Reason," Taylor's "Diegesis," "Ingersoll's Lectures," and the "Sixteen Crucified Saviors," and numerous other Liberal works. They not only called for these books themselves, but sent every few hours for them by various messengers ; until the run became so great that the godly proprietor,

with an eye to mammon, ordered from the Liberal publishers an invoice of the books most in demand, and he actually sold large numbers of them, so curious had many now become to see and read Infidelity for themselves.

Olive and Mrs. Slocum received a great many invitations to dinners and parties, some from admirers of their pluck and energy and some from curiosity hunters who like to have a lion or an elephant whenever they have company, so as to create a sensation. Olive seldom went out, because she felt so sorely the feud between herself and her father, which as yet still remained apparently unabated. But Mrs. Slocum was in her element; strong in her judgment, self-conscious in her abilities, and cogent in her reasoning, she did battle for the right with zeal, courage, and energy. She talked, she reasoned, she expounded to eager and attentive listeners. She received letters by the dozens from one and another who wished to understand better her reasons for abandoning a faith which she was heretofore so enthusiastic in advocating. She found it utterly impossible to explain her views to so many, so she got up clubs for **THE TRUTH SEEKER** and other Liberal publications, and told her inquiring friends to read for themselves, that a truth that would not bear investigation was no truth at all.

"If your religion is based upon fact," said she, "it will bear any test, any scrutiny, any opposition, and 'come out all the purer from the fiercer fire;' so fear not to investigate."

And they took her advice all the more willingly because she had once been their leader and guide in the church, and they all knew her for a good, honest, conscientious woman, and one who always had sound reasons for all she did and all she said.

## CHAPTER IX.

When the trial was over Mr. Barnes gave Abby and Olive an invitation to spend the evening with him and his family, and the Proctors also, and they all formed ties that afternoon that were never afterward broken. Friendships were created and cemented that were life-long and sincere. Olive and Abby staid there several days and received the congratulations of their sympathizers, and it was there that Abby held her levees with her inquiring friends.

The church was in great tribulation at this time. Its foes became those of its own faith; the deacons and elders saw that all the most intelligent and influential of the members were siding more or less with Liberalism, and the whole congregation was literally split in twain. Future union and unanimity seemed literally impossible, as many of the members now for the first time began to discover that there was something "rotten in Denmark." But their early prejudice together with a natural timidity prevented them from speaking out their doubts and convictions; but Olive and Abby had their real sympathy, and they longed for a more liberal creed, so that the church would be able to retain as helpers those bright stars who saw so clearly and so truthfully. There was another class whose actions were so atrocious and corrupt, and their reason so impaired by bigotry and superstition, that they felt they dare not meet death, or even go to sleep at night, without a promise from innocence to bear their guilt; and this class well knew it could not afford to let conscience speak or reason bear sway, and as every church in the city had now become more or less contaminated by the spread of Liberal documents and free speech, the latter class united in calling a general council of the church, and invited Olive and Mrs. Slocum to be present, hoping by such a vast superiority of numbers and influence, and by arrogance and intimidation—since other

means had failed—to bring them back to the fold of Christ; so Rev. Josiah Sanders sent the following note to the two ladies:

**MY DEAR SISTERS IN THE LORD :** It is with sorrow and hope that I address you this note inviting you to meet your Christian friends of several denominations in the Congregational church on Friday, at two o'clock P. M., to consult together in regard to your late unhappy fall from grace and the influence that fall has had upon society hereabouts. Be assured, dear sisters, that we all unite in prayer in your behalf to that God who alone is the searcher of all hearts.

Yours respectfully,

J. SANDERS.

To this note Abby replied as follows:

**FRIEND SANDERS:** Your invitation is accepted by Olive and myself with sincere pleasure. We are glad of an opportunity to unburden our minds before an intelligent assembly of our fellow-citizens. The horrors of a guilty conscience are hard to bear, and we shall gladly come before you and confess our shortcomings, hoping you will give us your assistance in keeping forever after in the straight and narrow way.

Respectfully,

ABBY BLOOM.

This reply of Abby seemed to evince so contrite and humble a spirit that there was a strong revival of hope, and great rejoicing by that class who dare not walk along the natural path of life without some charm or talisman, some flesh and blood between their teeth, in case of meeting death in company with the renowned gentleman of many names and many shapes, ranging from that of a small garter snake to that of a great and roaring lion, and whose abiding place is so changeable that it is found now in the heart of man, and then in the stomach of swine; in the deep green sea, and anon in the fiery furnace and bottomless pit, or joining the festive board with the sons of God, and often holding confabs with the Father Almighty himself, and making bargains and covenants with him *a la* Job.

But there were others who scrutinized this note and marked the peculiar wording of it, and who thought they saw more in it than at first sight met the eye; but they quietly bided their time and said nothing. Meanwhile the news of the recantation of Abby and Olive spread like wild-fire through the city, with any quantity of additions and misrepresentation, and all were feverish with excitement.

and anxiety for the time to arrive when they should publicly confess.

Ten minutes before two Squire Barnes drove up to the church with a carriage full of ladies—his wife and daughter, Olive, and Abby, and two more who were strangers to most of the city people, Susan and Fanny Proctor. The church was crowded, so that our friends found some difficulty in passing up the aisle. On a platform sat several ministers, and Rev. C. A. Bluster, too, was there with pencil and paper, ready to take notes for a small county paper, of which he was editor.

Abby and Olive were seated on the platform, and a pew vacated for their companions; then the proceedings were opened with singing and a solemn prayer by the Rev. Mr. Childs, then Rev. J. Sanders gave an exhortation, in which the welcome return of the lost sheep was feelingly and beautifully portrayed. He described the joy in heaven, the flutter of the angels' wings, the music of thousands of golden harps, and the blowing of trumpets. "See," said he, "the archangels are on the wing, heralding the joyful news to the uttermost parts of heaven, that these, our sisters who were lost, are now found and once more restored to Abraham's bosom."

"Amen!" "Praise the Lord!" "Glory to God!" "Hallelujah!" etc., rang out from every part of the church, while hundreds of handkerchiefs, saturated with the dew of divine emotion, and overflowing love to God on the restoration of not one but two lost sheep, waved and fluttered from almost every pew. Then "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" was sung with great spirit.

Mrs. Socum was now invited to come forward and tell her experience and describe the anguish of her soul since she had wandered from the flock. All was silent and still as death as she rose and advanced to the front of the platform, leaning on the arm of the Rev. Josiah Sanders, who introduced her to the assembly. With a grave and dignified smile upon her expressive countenance, she surveyed the vast crowd before her, then bowing slightly, she said:

"*Ladies and Gentlemen:* I am very glad that I have an opportunity like the present, in which I can freely unbosom

my feelings before you. Many and various have been the rumors which have gone abroad concerning me, and I now propose to tell you the real truth, that you may no longer labor under false impressions. A guilty conscience is the heaviest burden we mortals are ever called upon to bear, and I wish now to clear mine, as far as may be, of its load, as a 'fault confessed is half redressed.' No doubt there are many before me whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron. I hope, friends, you will all do as I intend doing, confess your errors, and strive to redress each wrong, and make right, as far as possible, the evils you have done. Many of us put the letter *I* into the word God, and then worship the gold we adore. Avarice is the brain of Christianized society, and every pillar of the church rests upon it for a foundation. Avarice has taken Pride for his bride, and Vanity serves as a handmaid of honor, and Extortion as best man; they are all members of this church, and faithfully bow down to gold and reverence it with a devotion worthy of St. Paul, who robbed other churches to do service to his own. And oh! my friends," she continued, clasping her hands, "what do I feel here? Are my own skirts clear? Have I not often followed Paul's advice myself, and thought it no crime to lie and deceive for the honor and glory of God, to get gold to support his church and his cause? But here and now I publicly acknowledge my errors in this respect, and ask forgiveness of many whom I see present that were my dupes; but, dear friends, a fault once committed cannot by any means be undone, so I shoulder the responsibility, and only grieve that I was so blind and ignorant, so mistaught by those whom I looked upon as guides and leaders to all truth. Verily, it was the 'blind leading the blind,' and we all fell into the ditch together. But I am getting my sight now, and am clambering out of the sloughs of superstition upon the solid ground of reason and fact, and as my feet touch the firm soil of truth I gladly extend my hand to my companions in adversity, and offer them all the assistance in my power."—

"Stop her! stop her!" shouted Deacon White.

Abby turned her flashing eyes upon him, and drawing her tall form to its utmost height, looked down upon him in



born, and exclaimed: "Who are you, that you would silence me thus, and debar these people from the privilege of once listening to a frank, honest avowal of facts? Are you an innocent man according to your own ideas of right and wrong? Have you paid the Lord fully the time which you have, as you have so often said, borrowed of him? Perhaps these people do not know that when business is pressing you often break the eighth Commandment and borrow a few hours of the 'Lord's time,' and then to satisfy your conscience repay him at some more convenient season, when you take your Bible and sit down to read and meditate just as many hours and minutes as you borrowed? Do you know you are not an honest borrower even then? for you ought justly to *pay interest*. All borrowers should do so as a recompense for the favor and for the time spent in waiting on them, but you were not even just in returning the principal! Once I marked you when you slept away half the borrowed time, even snoring heavily instead of paying your dues." \*

Here Abby was again interrupted by Rev. W. S. Black, who occasionally ministered in district school-houses. He was a sort of ex minister, and had no settled congregation, but liked to make himself prominent; so he demanded that Mrs. Stocum should cease her blasphemous harangue and take her seat.

Turning around and facing him squarely, she said: "Reverend sir, pray tell me how long it is since you preached a sermon on the evils of Sabbath-breaking, in a certain school-house, and then called at a farmer's and brought home as many sacks of grain as you could conveniently carry."

This shot disturbed the hornet's nest, but as many were present who had witnessed his return that Sabbath evening thus loaded, the fact was too well substantiated to be controverted † Mr. Sanders now came forward and told Abby that she *must not* speak any longer—that she was desecrating God's holy house by her vile accusations against his chosen ministers.

"Leave it to the people here assembled," said she. "Shall I go on or stop?"

\* This is a fact.

† A true incident.

"Go on! go on!" rang out from every part of the building; "give us the truth though the heavens fall."

"I say she *shall not* go on," said Josiah, in anger. "I will not sit here and listen to such vile slanders upon our holy religion and its sacred ministers."

Then Abby calmly and sternly looked upon him, and said in slow, distinct tones:

"Reverend sir, I ask you, in solemn earnestness, this question: Are you an honest, God-fearing man, or a dishonest hypocrite? I have known you long and well, and the whole city even is now ringing with your vile deeds, but because you are an elder in the church nobody dares to publicly call you to justice. All over your store are hung up golden texts of Scripture, and over the door as you enter are the words, 'Be ye honest in the sight of God and man,' and yet I here pronounce you a cheat and a swindler! You give scant weight and short measure, and sell pinchbeck for gold, tinsel for silver, and plated ware for the solid metal, and add items to such bills as you dare to, and forget(?) to give credits. I know whereof I speak, and can bring proof if you desire it."

"'Tis the last feather that breaks the camel's back," and this thrust at one standing so high in office was too much for the godly part of the assembly, and confusion began to prevail at such a rate that it was hard to discriminate between saints and sinners; so the meeting was broken up without Olive being called upon for her confession, or even the usual benediction being given; and as for the Rev. O. A. Bluser, he did not get any satisfactory items for his paper, at least any that he cared to put in print, for as far as *piety* was concerned, the whole thing had proved a failure. Poor Dr. Newton, too, felt more despondent than ever as he saw the foulness and corruption of the church he had so striven to make pure and good thus unmasked and exposed. He saw more and more how he had been only a tool in the hands of the base and designing Scum, and also cruelly deceived by those whom he thought the best men in the parish. And as for his daughter, he loved her so dearly, and knew her to be so good, just, and upright, and so truly conscientious always, that his reason

told him she was more than half right. Besides, his own experience and observation had shown him how rapidly science and knowledge were spreading, and that theology always had to bend to science and be made over and over again into new shapes and forms, to correspond with newly discovered facts and truths. He had often found it difficult to believe certain portions of the Bible to be the word of God, but to confess that he doubted the authenticity of the sacred Scriptures would never do for one of his profession, so he smothered his convictions, and even took pride in the neat sophistry that enabled him to get over the dubious portions of the Holy Writ so well, and to arrive at such excellence as he had done, and stand so well in the eyes of his church. But now it was all over; he had preached his last sermon, and his work in life was done.

It was some sixteen months after this great meeting that Olive wrote the following letter to Abby:

MY DEAR FRIEND: I received your welcome letter with the truest, purest pleasure, and rejoice that you have secured a divorce from Jacob and are living so quietly and happily, and enjoy so much your little school. It would have been impossible for you to have ever trusted or loved Mr. Slocum after he had so vilely deceived you and made such efforts to get possession of your little property. I tremble when I think how nearly he came to effecting his object when trying to get us into that asylum. But, poor fellow, he is to be pitied now, even if he deserves no better fate than has befallen him. He drinks deeply, and is crippled and nearly blind from an explosion of powder some boys were playing with on the green. He was striding along selfishly over their playground—you know he always would have his way if possible—the boys called to him to stop, but he went right on, and was just over the blast as it went off. I am glad you are not here to see him, for I know it would grieve you—as base as he has been to you—to see how he suffers.

You ask how I like married life. I am happy as a bird. Harry and his father are partners of Mr. Barnes now and are doing right well. We are building a new house, and with our joint means we shall be able to put up a nice one and furnish it suitably. You know I have three thousand dollars of my own, left me by my mother. Half of this Harry says shall remain on interest for my special use, so that if I need a little spending money at any time I will have it myself. He wanted me to keep it all, but I said,

"No, equal rights for equal partners. I'm determined to do my part toward making a home," and so he yielded to my wishes as he generally does when, as is rarely the case, we differ. I was amused the other day at Fanny. Harry was boasting to her what a smart wife he had.

"Well so she ought to be," said Fan. "for you had the pick of the mad-house."

"Ye," said Harry, "and you know it is generally the brightest intellects that get wrecked."

You see that dreadful time is all over, and we can afford to joke about it. And now I've such good news for you, dear Abby, and I know your motherly heart will rejoice with me. My dear father and myself are once more friends, and oh, I am so glad! Poor man; he was so lonely while I was staying at my aunt's. I did feel for him so much that it took away a great deal of the pleasure of the happy hours I spent at Proctor's, and when Harry would come to visit me. I was so glad he came to see us married and gave us his blessing. He is here two or three times a week now, and when we move into our new house he is to have a suite of rooms entirely to himself, and stay with us all the time. You know how broken in spirit he was after he thought his life-work was all done and himself of no more use to the world. Well, Harry's father—who has a way of his own—went to call upon him the Sunday after Harry and I were married, and he had a long talk with him. He told him it was very wrong to give up the battle of life while health, strength, and intellect remained. That because he could not follow the path first chosen was no reason why he should sit down in listless idleness and do nothing.

"Come, come," said Mr. Proctor, "be a man, and rouse up and *do* something and *be* something once more. You may yet climb to vaster heights than ever you have reached if you take *truth* as your guide, and follow implicitly wherever she leads; for you have always been so hampered by creeds and dogmas that you dared not think anywhere that leads outside of these. But now your search will be unlimited; *now* you are *free*, and light will flood your pathway if you will only give it welcome. It is selfish, morose, and ungrateful of you to thus wrap yourself up in your own private sorrows when so many need your love, sympathy, and companionship. Now you see you are casting a cloud over the bright sunshine of Olive's young life, and all her friends feel for her, and consequently you influence also the happiness of their lives. Remember, though an individual person may wrap himself in the mantle of sorrow and grief, he has no right to shadow over her lives with his gloom. Try by the better way, instead of nursing one's troubles, to try and forget them as quickly as possible and build up new sources of pleasure, so that we may create new avenues for

enjoyment, and thus make bright once more our own lives, and by our influence and cheerful personality, radiate happiness all around us. As to this subject of Christian mythology, I advise you to just take your Bible and begin at the beginning and read it through just as you would any work on history or biography, divesting yourself as far as possible of prejudice and preconceived opinions. Read it just as Olive and Fanny read it, and I'll engage that you will, by the time you have reached the end, arrive at nearly the same conclusions they did."

Now, Abby, you know there was a time when father would not have listened to a man like John Proctor, but circumstances have been so changed, and besides, during the wedding, he had got personally acquainted with him, and learned to respect him for his candor, honesty, and sound good sense, so that "John's way" had begun to look like a pretty good way after all; and when Mr. Proctor left him, father sat a long time thinking, and at last did get his Bible and commence its perusal upon the recommended plan, and very soon was deeply interested in it; and he told me afterward how my reasonings and talks came back to him as he went over the old ground again, especially the fall of man. He said he began to think that if man really was made perfect he could never have fallen at all, for he would have been as good as God himself, since nothing can be *more than perfect*. He would be pure and perfectly sane, and therefore it would be impossible for him to ever do any wrong, as sin could not enter into perfection.

Well, he read and read, and thought and thought, and argued with himself, till the scales all at once fell from his eyes, and he saw how long he and the world had been duped by the sophistical arts of a crafty and designing priesthood. Little by little he began to visit at Proctor's and talk with him and Harry, and read books and papers on fact and science, philosophy and nature, till he has at last grown to be as infidel as any of us. One day I went home to see him, and found him sitting on the porch looking very thoughtful but not at all sad or despondent as he had been while mourning "his fall from grace." After the morning salutations were over I drew my little seat up to his feet as I had been wont to do in childhood's days, and as his fingers tenderly thrust themselves through my hair, he said: "Olive, my child, I begin to think I am a very ignorant old man. That here at seventy years of age I really know next to nothing—my memory has failed me so utterly, and time has so impaired my brain, that I seem to know less and less every day. At seven years old I knew that God had made man, while at seventy I do not know but what man has made God. At seven years old I knew where heaven and hell were, while at seventy my eyes are

so dim that I am not only unable to see them at all, but do not even know that there are any such places. At seven years old I knew that man was made perfect from the dust of the earth. At seventy I do not know but that he is made imperfectly from some lousey old monkeys. At seven years I knew there was but one ass that ever spoke, and now at seventy I believe there are thousands, and they know their master's crib too. At seven I knew a minister was a servant of God; at seventy I do not know but that man is the master and God the slave. At seven years old I knew that Jesus Christ died on the cross; at seventy I do not know that he was ever born. At seven years old I knew how to cipher so as to make three to be one and one to be three; but now I have forgotten how to do it. At seven I knew how long it had been since the world was made and finished, while at seventy I doubt if the job is yet done, or if it is, it wants a deal in the way of repairs. So, Olive, in view of all this, you see to what a state of imbecility I am reduced, but I sincerely hope that I shall have the benefit of your sympathy and love in my affliction, as no one can tell what a few years will bring them to, and you see, my dear, I am not the man I once was. I have given you a glimpse of the ravages of time upon animated nature. I do not want to frighten you, Olive, against old age, as Beeler was frightened when he went to the drug-store for something comfortable, speedy, and effectual, to ferry him over the river."

I was delighted, Abby, at this humorous confession of my father that he really came to see things as we see them. With his education and the experience he has had in the church he is well fitted now to aid and help the cause we so love—the cause of Freethought. You know how often we have remarked that many of our most noted Liberals were educated to be preachers. But my letter is long and I must close, wishing you all happiness.

Your loving friend, OLIVE NEWTON PROCTOR.

Now, with a long letter from our young friend Fanny, we will close our story, as she tells whatever of interest has been left untold in this little simple sketch. Her letter, also, was written to Abby, who, good soul, had opened wide her kind, motherly heart to the young about her, and on them lavished the great wealth of her affections and the sage and wise counsel she was so well fitted to give. She had found her mission in instructing the young, and training their inquiring intellects into the paths of truth, fact, and reason. She avoided all discussion upon theology with her pupils, but she taught geology, history, and science, as they really

were, and whenever a knotty point conflicted with the religious tenets of the pupils, she would say: "Well, with *that* I have nothing to do. I teach you facts as nature shows them to be, and as science proves them to be; and if you wish to make them agree with your theology, go to your religious teachers for assistance." "One world at a time" is my motto." And so this noble woman was now filling a position in life where she was able to do a great and good work one that would more than recompense the world for all the errors she had aided to sustain while she was "Sister Silex," and one of the head leaders in her church. And now for Fanny's letter:

MY DEAR KIND "MOTHER ABBY," For so we all feel you to be, I was so glad to get the letter from you, telling of the calm peace and quiet happiness of your daily life, that I sit down at once to answer it, and tender to you our rejoicings that you find so much to do and so much to be glad for.

You ask is Susan married yet. No; but she will be in a few weeks. We are all well pleased with her intended. He came from New York, and is a lecturer on geology and other sciences. One day we all went up the cliff, and he knocked off a bit of the rock, and at night delivered a lecture upon it, telling the people where he got it, and that it was once melted earth, and was probably millions of years old. I tell you it made the pious ones grit their teeth, but he proved all he said so conclusively that many were converts, and he sold right on the spot a dozen volumes of "Denton's Lectures on Geology." You know how plain, convincing, interesting, and even romantic that little work is. There are few who have not read it in all this neighborhood, and some value it as their best book.

I was at meeting last Sunday in our village school-house, and heard a hard-shell Baptist preach. You know they are like the Quakers, speak by inspiration, and don't study their sermons at all; and they oppose education, too, thinking it more harmful than beneficial. Well, one old fellow told a story that you would really marvel that it could find actual believers here in the last half of the nineteenth century.

He said that two friends were walking out, and one was showing the other a remarkably fine field of wheat. His friend says, "You will have a good crop here when it is ripe." "Yes," replied the owner, "if the Lord lets it alone." "And," continued the preacher, "when harvest time came along, the two men again passed through the wheat-field, and there stood the wheat, just the same as on that day when they had been there before. The grain was

fresh and green, but it had not grown an inch, nor was there a head of wheat in the whole field. The Lord had taken him at his word and *let it alone*. All around were fields of wheat ripe for the cradle or the reaper, the bending heads heavy with their precious freight, while this, barren and worthless, stared its owner in the face as an awful result of tampering with the plans of the Almighty."\*

I heard some wondering, after meeting, if the wheat was still green; if it stood there fresh through the cold of last winter when the mercury stood so far down below zero. I presume it was fine pasturing in the spring when all else was brown and bare.

I've seen the time, Abby, when I, too, might have believed this story, for I thought it possible for a god to do anything; but now I know there is no power above Nature, or outside of Nature, that can counteract her unvarying laws; so I have ceased to look for miracles as well as fairies and good geniuses who would give me impossible things and bestow upon me impossible attributes.

The same Sunday I was listening to this silly tale, Susan was attending a funeral in the city (you know we seldom go to church unless some unusual occurrence draws us there), and during the discourse the preacher told of two negroes who were disputing with several others of their color, and denying the existence of a God, or of having any fear of his action or control, and during the dispute a flash of lightning came and killed the two who opposed the scriptural doctrine, and slightly injured the others, and on the breast of the chief infidel spokesman the surgeon who examined the body found these letters, "G O D," in a triangle, burned in by the lightning.

When Susan came home and told that the preacher had mixed in such a foolish improbability with his discourse, I was ready to exclaim, What is there that cannot be swallowed by credulous mortals if it be but woven in with their religion. Well, I've since seen the same account in the papers, but only one man was killed, and there was no discussion at all, and no infidelity or doubt of God's existence, but only that a man who was a blasphemer was struck, and something resembling the word "GOD," in a triangle, was traceable on the burned flesh. So you see, Abby, how pious scares are got up out of mere nothings, and then perpetuated by wonder-seekers and those who wish them true. You cannot rely upon half you read or hear as fact or truth. Though much of it has really a groundwork of actuality, fiction is so woven in with it it is impossible to separate the two so as to know which is the real and which the ideal.

You inquire what has become of Rev. Mr. Sandera. His

\*This story was actually told by a preacher.



store and jewelry-shop he then went to the dogs soon after your exposure of him. You would be surprised to hear how many people found errors and false charges in his accounts after they began to watch him. His only son, Joe, was a smart young fellow, you know, and when a mere boy he could preach and pray like a parson, and was such a sweet singer that the church idolized him. Well, he went to New York and joined a fashionable church; got into a dry-goods store as clerk and book-keeper, and soon made or filched from his employer money enough to start for himself; and he had a good run of the upper-class custom. He was so pious, you see, that all his church patronized him. But somehow, all of a sudden, he failed. They (the church) started him again, and again he failed; but not losing faith yet in this pious brother, they started him a third time, and he then took a sudden rise and made money hand over hand, and is getting to be very wealthy. There are whispers that his real prosperity was caused by his repeated failures, and that his creditors' losses were his gains; but he gives so generously to the church that these things are never spoken aloud.

I presume Olive has told you all about Dr. Newton's noble stand for truth vs. all superstitions, and among them he calls Christianity the very worst superstition of all, because it is more susceptible of the appearance of truth. It is so modeled over into new meanings that it is nearest our own age and generation, and so all the more dangerous as well as powerful. The good old man has been a constant visitor at our house of late, and he and father are warm friends, and enjoy each other's society immensely. We often talk of the time when he was so full of trouble. He said yesterday, while talking to me, that he could hardly believe he was himself, so changed did everything seem.

"Just to think," continued he, "how terribly mortified and ashamed I felt after I realized the enormity of the crime Slocum was so nearly successful in having us perpetrate. I could not look my old friends in the face, but retired in sadness and utter melancholy to my own room, and, like Jacob of old, refused to be comforted. I mourned, as it were, in sackcloth and ashes, and no friend was admitted to my presence, for I would have no witness to my anguish of soul as I beat my knee at the footstool of Grace to pour out my sorrow at my Redeemer's feet, and called upon him in beseeching tones to calm the boisterous waves that beat so tumultuously in my bosom. Then for days I was as one stunned. I sat like a petrified statue. My tongue refused to move, my thoughts to leave the brain, and my very breath seemed to congeal as it left my lungs, and fell like a dead mass as it dropped from my lips. I tried to pray, but the words of my daughter would ring in my ears, 'Father,

father! there is nothing outside of matter to pray to. No prayer was ever yet answered. Not a breeze has ever been tempered to the shorn lamb.' And then reason would raise her banner to the breeze and proudly bid defiance to all gods of man's creation, even to the uttermost parts of the earth or in the heavens beyond. I would long to preach truth, science, and fact, and be rid forever of all clogging creeds.

"Then for hours would I review my past life, and every act, word, and thought would, as it were, come up before me to have judgment passed upon them. My sermons, my prayers, my exhortations, all of them were again gone over in my mind, and I saw how carefully I had manufactured each one with scrupulous nicety, so that not a word should conflict with my church, creed, or the Bible; or, more still, the well-known prejudices of most of my people. I wrote and spoke for the approval and applause of the gaping, wondering crowd. I studied more the passions and mind of the people than the word or will of God. Yes, I saw it all, but what avail was it? Could I undo the past? The future was so dark. Olive, my darling, was estranged by my own bigotry, and I had shut myself up from all who once knew and loved me. I felt degraded and lost. I smote my forehead and bade my brain to cease its functions, and it did seem as though my wish was granted. A dull, stupid lethargy settled upon my mind. I lost all consciousness. I did not sleep, for no rest was given my physical and intellectual faculties. It was not a trance, for there remained no vivid impression upon my mind; it was only a muddy mixture of incoherent thoughts, and all was dark, mysterious, and incomprehensible. After a time I roused myself, and looking about me my eye fell upon a bound volume of my sermons, which only a few months before I had gazed upon in a flutter of pride and vanity, as they came crisp and new from the publishers. I exclaimed aloud, O! what are these when once you take from them the few moral precepts woven in with the tissue of sophistical theology? Nothing at all! Less, infinitely less, than nothing! A shadow, a dream! Ah, yes, did not Olive tell me once that the whole Christian religion was founded upon Joseph's dream? Our red brother of the forest, too, may have dreamed of his happy hunting-grounds, where millions of elk, deer, and buffaloes feed on the plains of his heaven, where neither frost, snow, nor the feet of white men are permitted to enter, and so strong are his faith and hope, that he takes his bow, his hunting-knife, and his pipe with him to his grave, that he may carry them along to this heaven he dreams of."

"And hell, too, may not that also have originated in a dream, in some man's fancy or imagination? Some one

who wished torture unutterable inflicted upon his enemy ? and burning being the most intense pain he could conceive of, he created a hell of never-ending fire. And some people who dwell in the extreme north, among the frozen seas, have their hell represented as the *coldest* conceivable spot, while their heaven is continual sunshine, plenty of blubber, and warm, calm, quiet seas. Ah, yes, those sermons, as I looked at and reflected upon them became as gall and wormwood to my sight, and I longed to blot them from existence, but no step of all our past can ever be retraced. What is done is done, and gone out of our control.

"I had been reading, a few days before this, Miller's first volume of church history for the first two centuries. It is an old book, and, I thought, trustworthy; but on page 116, I think it is, something like this occurs: "The evidence at this period is so contradictory and conflicting that we make our own selection, and publish what we think is true." Ah, thinks I to myself, have I't I often done just this very thing in writing a sermon, and even worse than this, for I have chosen that view which was in accordance with my own opinion, when a fair presumption was in favor of truth being on the other side.

"My mind went back to my college days, when I was taught that the Bible and Christianity were facts, and was taught how to explain them, but not to examine whether they were true or false. This is the pillar that supports the whole superstructure. But it is a question only of time how soon that pillar shall be undermined, and the structure fall to the ground.

"The pope is infallible; his word is the will of God. High Church, Low Church, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, Campbellite, and hundreds of others take refuge beneath the rotten pillar, and all they say must be taken as truth, no matter how they contradict each other."

Oh, Abby, my heart bled for this good man as he described how he struggled, thought, and felt during those lonely hours, when he was so busy sifting out the errors and mistakes of a lifetime and collecting the grains of fact and welding them into the new edifice he was now erecting on the foundation of science and philosophy. He would get totally discouraged sometimes, and perhaps never would have succeeded if father, who has a way of his own, you know, had not gone to him one day and had a long, serious conversation with him.

This seemed to start him on the right track, and he went straight ahead and came out conqueror. He is such an acquisition to our family since he came to see things as we do, that we have him here all the time we can. He teaches the children, and, indeed, we all learn of him, for his mind is a perfect storehouse of literature; it is almost equal to a regu-

lar library, so well has he been educated and afterwards read and studied. Harry says he means to coax him to live with him and Olive together, as soon as they get moved into their new house. Like father, he has a way of his own, and generally carries his point.

And now, Abby dear, I just want to whisper into your ear a little secret concerning myself. I have a sweetheart, and oh ! he is "so nice," and I am so proud of him. Yes, yee; I know I am too young and all that, but you see we shall not marry for ever so long, for he wants to travel first and collect material for a book on botany and entomology. He was here collecting specimens, and came to our house for a drink of milk, and seeing our cases of insects, and the large herbanum on the table, he was so interested that he staid three hours, and you don't know how much I enjoyed it. He has sailed one trip on the ship with uncle, and knows him well. He can tell the name of every flower and plant in our garden, and all about them. He and I have taken several walks, and never a bug, nor even a weed, escapes his notice, but he says the most valuable specimen he has found was discovered by him that day when he stopped at a certain cottage at Rosemary Hill for a bowl of milk ! I do wonder to what *genus* it belonged. Perhaps, Abby, you can guess, as you know so much.

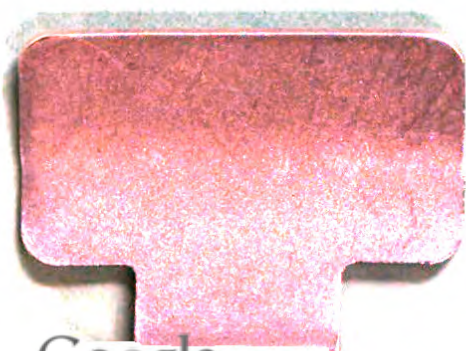
But my letter is so long I must close now by giving you a pen picture of our home group. Mother sits in her old rocker, knitting, and also teaching little Grace the magic art; Willie is drawing a horse on his slate; Olive has gone to meet Harry and father, whom I see just coming up the hill home from work; I am in my old corner writing to my beloved friend Abby. And may this letter find her well and happy, is the wish of yours, lovingly,

FANNY PROCTOR.

The tale of John's Way is now written and done;  
 The righteous have triumphed and happiness won.  
 The sinning and erring have reaped as they sowed,  
 And thorns and briars they found on the road.  
 Our moral is simple and plain as the day,  
 'Tis, Always do right, and, like John, have a way  
 That is wholly your own, so you may not be led  
 To accept or reject because it is said  
 That the Bible commands, or the priest calls it true,  
 And dubs it a fact, saying, "Swallow it too."  
 But search Nature's volume, her secrets unfold,  
 And you'll find in her bosom a treasure untold.  
 She'll tell you all things result from her law,  
 That there was never effect without adequate cause;  
 That matter, with powers and potencies grand,

Gave us air, ocean, and sunlight, the sea and the land,  
 Produced in due time grass, flowers, and fruit,  
 The fish and the serpent, the bird and the brute;  
 And man, in his turn, developed, and grew.  
 And close by his side a woman we view.  
 Is the summit ye reached? Ah! no one can tell—  
 Nature hath ways, which, like John's ways, are well.

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