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CHAPTER I.—1820-1825.

INFANCY—BLINDED AT SIX WEEKS OF AGE—AM
THANKFUL FOR IT NOW—PARENTS AND RELA-
TIVES—LONELY AMUSEMENTS—ASKING GOD
FOR A CHANCE IN THE WORLD—HIS ANSWER
—THE BELLIGERENT LAMB—DANIEL DREW'S
ATTEMPTED PRESENT OF “STOCK.”

IT seemed intended by the blessed Provi-
dence of God, that I should be blind all
my life; and I thank Him for the dispen-
sation. I was born with a pair of as good
eyes as any baby ever owned; but when I was
six weeks of age, a slight touch of inflamma-
tion came upon them: and they were put under
the care of a physician.

What he did to them, or what happened in
spite of him, I do not know, but it resulted in
their permanent destruction, so far as seeing is
concerned; and I was doomed to blindness all
the rest of my earthly existence.

I have heard that this physician never ceased
expressing his regret at the occurrence; and
that it was one of the sorrows of his life. But

if I could meet him now, I would say, "Thank you, thank you—over and over again—for making me blind, if it was through your agency that it came about!"

This sounds strangely to you, reader? But I assure you I mean it—every word of it; and if perfect earthly sight were offered me to-morrow, I would not accept it. Did you ever know of a blind person's talking like this before?

Why would I not have that doctor's mistake—if mistake it was—remedied? Well, there are many reasons; and I will tell you some of them.

One is, that I know, although it may have been a blunder on the physician's part, it was no mistake of God's. I verily believe it was His intention that I should live my days in physical darkness, so as to be better prepared to sing His praises and incite others so to do. I could not have written thousands of hymns—many of which, if you will pardon me for repeating it, are sung all over the world—if I had been hindered by the distractions of seeing all the interesting and beautiful objects that would have been presented to my notice.

Another reason is, that, while I am deprived of many splendid sights (which, as above mentioned, might draw me away from the principal work of my life), I have also been spared the

seeing of a great many unpleasant things. The merciful God has put His hand over my eyes, and shut out from me the sight of many instances of cruelty and bitter unkindness and misfortune, that I would not have been able to relieve, and must simply have suffered in seeing. I am content with what I can know of life through the four senses I possess, practically unimpaired, at eighty-three years of age. Hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling, are still felt, in their fullest degree.

Another reason for my apparently strange assertion is, that I have been able to test and make sure so many kind and loving friends. Almost without exception, the great world has been good to me: all the kinder, perhaps, on account of what is considered my affliction. I may say truly that I never for a moment presumed on my blindness for any extra courtesy or advantage, yet I have often felt that it was a bond between sympathetic hearts and mine.

I was born in Putnam County, N. Y., March 24, 1820. My father's name was John Crosby: he died when I was very young. My grandfather fought in the War of 1812; my great-grandfather in the Revolution. My mother's given name was the good old-fashioned one of Mercy.

I have always been proud at having been

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

related, though not very nearly, to that famous hero of the Revolution, Enoch Crosby. I have often sat when a little child, and listened to stories of his courage and heroism. Though he never came to be an officer, yet it was universally admitted that he did the Revolutionary cause more good than many a gallant general. One of Cooper's most famous novels has him for its hero. He lies buried now, in a little country cemetery near Carmel, N. Y., with scores of my race sleeping around him.

As a child, although blind, I was by no means helpless, or of a sedentary disposition: I indulged in many of the sports enjoyed by my little playmates, and romped and clambered wherever they did. I could climb a tree or ride a horse as well as any of them, and many good people when seeing me at play were surprised at being told of my "misfortune." I attended school at times, but, of course, could not study: raised letters for the blind were not common then.

One of my principal amusements was to sit with hands clasped, or engaged in some piece of work with needles, and listen to the many voices of Nature. The laughing and sighing of the wind—the sobbing of the storm—the rippling of water—the "rain on the roof"—the artillery of the thunder—all impressed me

Ambitions, and Repinings.

more than I can tell. I lived many lives with my imagination. Sometimes I was a sailor, standing at the mast-head, and looking out into the storm; sometimes a general, leading armies to battle; then a clergyman, addressing large audiences and pleading with them to come to Christ; then the leader of a gigantic choir of voices, singing praises to God. My ambition was boundless; my desires were intense to live for some great purpose in the world, and to make for myself a name that should endure; but in what manner was it to be done?

A poor little blind girl, without influential friends, could have as many ambitions as any one; but how was she to achieve them? What was there for her? The great world that could see, was rushing past me day by day, and sweeping on toward the goal of its necessities and desires; while I was left stranded by the wayside. "Oh, you cannot do this—because you are blind, you know; you can never go there, because it would not be worth while: you could not see anything if you did, you know":—these and other things were often said to me, in reply to my many and eager questionings.

Often, when such circumstances as this made me very blue and depressed, I would creep off alone, kneel down, and ask God if, though

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blind, I was not one of His children; if in all His great world He had not some little place for me; and it often seemed that I could hear Him say, "Do not be discouraged, little girl: you shall some day be happy and useful, even in your blindness." And I would go back among my associates, cheered and encouraged; and feeling that it would not be very long before my life would be full of activity and usefulness.

And so it was, that gradually I began to lose my regret and sorrow at having been robbed of sight: little by little God's promises and consolations came throbbing into my mind. Not only the Scriptures, but the hymns that I heard sung Sabbath after Sabbath, made deep impressions upon me.

With the ultra-acute hearing which generally accompanies blindness, I could distinguish every word of the hymns, however indistinctly they might be sung; and they were in many cases a refreshment to my young soul. Even in childhood, I began to wonder who made those hymns; and if I myself could ever make one that people would sing.

As already indicated, a growing, healthy girl, although she may be blind, cannot live entirely in her intellectual nature: and I did not lack means for my share of the regulation juvenile sports. I dare say I was as bother-

A Quadrupedal Toy.

some to my mother as are most children to theirs; and was constantly asking for some novel way by which to amuse myself.

One day she called me to her side, and said, "Here, Fanny, is a *live* toy: only be careful of it and not hurt it."

It was a sweet, lovely pet lamb!—and I seriously thought, for a day or two, of having my name changed to "Mary", of whom I had heard as once possessing a similar piece of property, and of smuggling the dear little pet away to some school, to see if the teacher would turn it out, and if it would then linger near, etc. I finally gave up the idea, but I played with my little quadrupedal toy morning, noon, and night: until at last the sturdy creature got into the habit of playfully butting me over, as one of its pastimes.

Now came the first tragedy of my life: after maltreating me several times, and being promptly forgiven on each occasion by its loving victim, the "lamb", which was now fast assuming the proportions of sheephood, became the subject of a star-chamber trial, and was condemned to death, and to punishment after death: to be cooked and eaten. Be sure most of it was done before I knew anything about it: else probably I should have raised the roof. The first I knew about it, I was told we were

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to have lamb-chop for dinner: and in the ominous silence that followed, I divined my favorite's fate. Tears and fasting followed, but they were of no avail: the belligerent little friend was no more.

Daniel Drew, afterwards a celebrated railroad magnate, but then a drover, dealing in an entirely different kind of stock, often passed our house with droves of sheep and cattle. We were always great friends: and soon after the above-mentioned sad event, he came into our house and placed a small lamb in my arms, saying, "Here, Fanny, is a present for you"; but I had no heart then to accept it, and declined the gift, to his great surprise.

CHAPTER II.—1825.

A SLOOP-JOURNEY DOWN THE HUDSON—ACTING AS CAPTAIN'S FIRST MATE—A PATRIOTIC SONG—DRS. MOTT AND DELAFIELD GIVE ADVERSE DECISION—BLIND FOR LIFE!—THE SAD JOURNEY HOME—WHAT THE WAVES SAID.

ONE evening, when I was about five years old, my good mother called me to her from the dooryard, where I had been playing, and I ran to her side. As I say, it was evening, but that made no difference with me: I could play in the night as well as daytime, and had no trouble in reaching her side, whether the candles were lighted or not. There were no kerosene lamps then, and people in the country had to depend for their light upon candles, made by dipping a wick of cotton repeatedly in melted tallow, until enough of it clung to the wick to make a "body" for the apparatus; and when that was lighted it did not illuminate a house to any great extent.

Well, my dear mother called me to her side,