

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

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,

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

and said: "Fanny, I am going to take you on a little journey. We shall travel first in a wagon, till we come to the bank of a beautiful river, with mountains on each side of it; then we shall get into a sail-boat and sail south for many miles; then we shall come to a great city, larger than anything of which you have ever heard or thought, and stay there for several days; and then home again."

The idea of taking a journey filled me with joy, and I danced about the room with perhaps not enough attention to the furniture that kept getting in the way; but my transports were somewhat modified, when she explained the object of the expedition—to have a surgical operation performed upon my eyes. "There may be some pain with it, Fanny," she explained: "but you are willing to bear it, are you not?"

I already knew what pain was:—it is, alas! one of the first things we learn in life! and I shrank a little at the idea of any of it being inflicted upon me. "But, Fanny," my mother explained, "perhaps it will result in giving you your sight: so that you can see everything that is around you, and play with the rest of the children exactly as they do, study pretty pictures, and read interesting books, and enjoy yourself in a hundred ways that you do not, as

Sailing Down the Hudson.

your eyes are now." Then I was happy again.

This was in 1825; and you may readily believe that means of communication were not many and varied, in those days. There was not even a stage from our home or from near there, to any point upon the Hudson River.

We started one morning before the early dawn was in the skies, and rode in a market-wagon to Sing Sing, on the Hudson, where we were to take a sloop for New York; steam-boats were still very few and far between. This musically-named town, in which I thought every one, probably, belonged to the choir, was then a small country hamlet, straggling along the banks of the river—with no idea that it would ever bear such a prominent part in the punishment of the malefactors of a great commonwealth.

So at four o'clock in the soft dawn of that summer morning, we unfurled our sails, and went rushing down the river toward the great metropolis. It is perhaps needless to say that the novel experience was a delight to me: I was all over the deck, and soon, I may safely say, in the good graces of everybody aboard. I could not of course view the beautiful scenery through which we were passing; but there were plenty of friends to describe it to me, and I enjoyed it upon the whole as much perhaps

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

as if I could have seen, and as if I had had to depend entirely upon my own powers of observation. I have always delighted in passing through beautiful scenery, and, indeed, enjoyed the sensation of traveling—perhaps more than some that can see; and I find that other blind people are the same in this respect.

My poor mother was at times seasick, or, more accurately expressing it, river-sick: but I kept well, and after knowing that she was comfortable in her berth, and being told that nobody ever died of that kind of sickness, and that she would be all the better for it soon, I was the gayest of the gay; and Captain Green immediately adopted me as "first mate of the sloop." I was, I believe, called a fairly pretty child; and my black curls and frisky manners did not detract from the five-year-old disposition that developed in me, to be the belle of the company.

The dear old Captain pretended to discover that I was a great vocalist; and at times kept me busy singing all the little songs I had gathered up since old enough to learn and understand them. These were not very many or particularly deep; but they served. One of them I remember inaugurated itself with the following impressive lines, sung to a famous patriotic air:

Singing at Good Prices.

"I wish I was a Yankee's wife,
And then I would have *somehin'*:
Every fall an ear of corn,
And now and then a *pumkin!*"

I felt, even then, that there was something a little irregular in the rhyming of this stanza: but the Captain pretended to hold my song particularly in very high esteem, and whenever he was a little blue, called me to him and coaxed or hired me to sing it. With the usual thrift of the accomplished cantatrice, I gradually increased my prices as the article grew more and more in demand; and was very much disappointed when, after gliding through the beautiful Highlands and past the impressive palisades, we arrived in the Big City.

It was early in the morning when we landed, having been twenty-four hours in making the trip from Sing Sing—a journey that I have frequently performed since, by railroad, in fifty-five minutes.

We went to the house of a friend who bore the good old name of Jacob Smith, at No. 10 Roosevelt Street, a very fine place at that time; and soon we were in the presence of the famous Dr. Valentine Mott. I felt that Dr. Mott had a kind, pleasant face: singularly enough I have always been able to form a pretty accu-

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

rate opinion of a countenance, by the voice that proceeded from it.

Being but a little child, to whom one of God's creatures was about the same as another, except as they pleased or displeased me, I did not stand so much in awe of the great Dr. Mott; but my mother did, and listened with bated breath to hear what he should say of my case. It was not the first time that poor mortals had hung upon his words; for he was even then considered the foremost surgeon of his time. He occupied the chair of surgery in Columbia College, and had performed operations that no other practitioner ever dared to undertake. He had, seven years before, placed a ligature around the brachiocephalic trunk, or arteria innominata, only two inches from the heart, for aneurism of the right sub-clavian artery; and that for the first time in the history of surgery. To be sure the patient died within a month; but with the comforting assurance that he had had something done to him with a knife, that no other patient had ever experienced. And as this was before the age of chloroform, or any other very effective anæsthetics, death must certainly have been a relief.

Well, Dr. Mott and another celebrated surgeon at that time, named Dr. Delafield, ex-

Blindness as a Favor.

amined my eyes and told my tearfully-listening mother, that there was no hope for them: malpractice had spoiled them. And so we returned to our country home—taking the same sloop and the same market-wagon as those in which we had come.

The poor doctor who had spoiled my eyes, soon disappeared from the neighborhood; and we never heard any more about him. He is probably dead, before this time; but if I could ever meet him, I would tell him that he unwittingly did me the greatest favor in the world.

I was more thoughtful and sad on the way back up the river: the great doctor had not been above placing his fatherly hand on my head, and saying, "Poor little girl!" and that touch of sympathy went with me as I journeyed homeward. Hour after hour, when I had crept into my little "bunk" on the sloop, I heard the dear waves of the river singing to me, and telling me not to be discouraged. "Fanny, be brave! Fanny, be brave!" they seemed to say: "brighter days will come yet!"

And, indeed, they were coming: although from what direction I did not then know. But I never lost my faith in the great Father above; I knew that the river-waves were His, and that I had heard His voice.