

CHAPTER III.—1830.

BIBLE-INSTRUCTION—MY FIRST POEM—MY FIRST LITERARY ADMIRER—HIS INABILITY TO CONCEAL HIS SENTIMENTS—A TERRIBLE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE—A PLEA FOR MENTAL LIGHT—GOD'S GOODNESS IN ANSWERING PRAYER.

THE greatest piece of good fortune that attended me when a little girl, was that I was taught the Bible—line upon line, and precept upon precept. When nine years old we moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut, and there lived for a time in one of the numerous and intelligent Hawley families, of which Connecticut has so many, and from one of which Senator Hawley sprang.

Mrs. Hawley taught me the Bible, and the poetry of the day, in about equal portions. She was an old Puritan Presbyterian, and took everything in the sacred writ as literally as the most orthodox Scotchman could do; but she loved at the same time the green meadows and singing brooks of imagination.

Child-Verses.

Even when ten years old, I could recite the first four books of the Old and the first four books of the New Testament, without a mistake; and I knew secular poems almost without number. Of course, as soon as I began to hear poetry, it made me want to write some. I believe I am not entirely unique in this respect: editors tell me that their mail-bags teem with poetical attempts made by all sorts of people in all sorts of places and on all sorts of subjects.

My first poem, composed when I was eight years old, was as follows:

Oh, what a happy child I am,
Although I cannot see!
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.

How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
So weep or sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, nor I won't!

I quote this poem, it is needless to say, not on account of its literary style, or as anything very remarkable, except that it gives an indication of the spirit in which I have taken life throughout all these eighty-three years—of

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

optimism, and of thankfulness because I had as many blessings as I did, rather than of re-pining because one was left out.

I composed other verses, and always on the subjects nearest me. The fragrance of a rose—the singing of the wind in the trees—the death of a favorite bird—all these inspired me to juvenile effort; and, anxious to hear what others thought of my work, it was not long before I began to free these little stanzas from the leashes of my memory, and let them loose upon my poor dear mother.

She wrote down some of them, and was greatly pleased; she and the good Mrs. Hawley held a literary consultation concerning them. They decided that they were very good, for a girl of that age; and copies were sent to my grandfather.

I now found my first gallant and unqualified admirer. The dear old gentleman wrote a very enthusiastic letter concerning the poor little "pieces", and told my mother that we indeed had a poet in the family, and that if I lived and improved as I ought to do, I would be an honor to them all. "But," he added, cautiously, "you must not *tell* her this, or it will make her proud, and spoil her." And it is due my mother's prudence and good sense, to say, that she never imparted to me anything about my

Praying, Instead of Complaining.

grandfather's encomiums: but he soon saw me, and could not refrain from giving them to me at first hand.

But there was one terrible hunger that afflicted me during all these years: and that was for knowledge—knowledge—knowledge! I felt that there were a million things that I ought to know, and had no means of learning.

If I ever lamented that I was blind, it was through these opening days of girlhood—and that for only one cause: the fact that it debarred me from reading for myself. The amount of literature printed in raised letters for the blind was very limited in those days, and I had been so accustomed to knitting, that my fingers were not adapted to learning how to read by such means, even if alphabets for the blind had been common.

So, night and night again, I have gone to bed drearily, weeping because I could not drink of the waters of knowledge that I knew were surging all around me. I felt at times like a sailor on a great lake of fresh, crystal water, heated and thirsty, but bound hand and foot, so that he could not get to the blessed relief.

"Dear God, please give me light!" was my prayer, day by day. I did not mean physical light—but mental! I had long been contented to bear the burden of blindness: but my edu-

cation—my education—how was I to get it? The ordinary schools could do little for me; I was not able to read and educate myself, as many home-students have done; those around had little time to read to me; and I felt as if I were in danger of growing more and more ignorant every day. God help those who thirst for knowledge, and find every way for obtaining it cut off!

Sooner or later, I always rose from my knees feeling that these prayers would be answered. God has always had a way of granting my petitions to Him, some wonderful examples of which I shall give, farther along in this book.

How much better it is to pray, hopefully and with faith, for those things we need, than to fret and complain because we do not already possess them!

CHAPTER IV.—1835.

A THRILLING ANNOUNCEMENT—AN EDUCATION AT LAST!—ON THE "TIPTOE OF EXPECTATION"—STARTING FOR SCHOOL—ARRIVAL AT THE INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND—A HELPER OF OPPRESSED GREEKS—AN ACQUAINTANCE OF LORD BYRON—SCHOOL-LIFE STARTS OFF WELL.

SO matters ran on, until I was fifteen years old: and then, one day, something was told me that brought a thrill of joy and delight never, never to be forgotten.

"Fanny, arrangements have been made for you to attend the school for the blind, in New York."

Only a few words, but what a flood of joy they admitted to the poor sad little soul that had so long pined and prayed for knowledge! God had responded to my prayer, at last—through His own means, and by His own faithful helpers. Oh, if the founders and sustainers of such institutions could only know a millionth part of the joy they cause, they would