

## CHAPTER VIII.

### I AM INTRODUCED TO NEW CHARACTERS AND ENTER THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT BEDLOW REVIVAL.

WHILE Henry was a guest at my old home, Mr. Bradford resumed his visits there. That he had had much to do with securing my father's prosperity in his calling, I afterwards learned with gratitude, but he had done it without his humble friend's knowledge, and while studiously keeping aloof from him. I never could imagine any reason for his policy in this matter except the desire to keep out of Mrs. Sanderson's way. He seemed, too, to have a special interest in Henry; and it soon came to my ears that he had secured for him his place as teacher of one of the public schools. Twice during the young man's visit at Bradford, he had called and invited him to an evening walk, on the pretext of showing him some of the more interesting features of the rapidly growing little city.

Henry's plan for study was coincident with my own. We had both calculated to perfect our preparation for college during the winter and following spring, under private tuition; and this work, which would be easy for me, was to be accomplished by him during the hours left from his school duties. I made my own independent arrangements for recitation and direction, as I knew such a course would best please Mrs. Sanderson, and left him to do the same on his return. With an active temperament and the new stimulus which had come to me with a better knowledge of my relations and prospects, I found my mind and my time fully absorbed. When I was not engaged in study, I was actively assisting Mrs. Sanderson in her affairs.

One morning in the early winter, after Henry had returned, and had been for a week or two engaged in his school, I met

Mr. Bradford on the street, and received from him a cordial invitation to take tea and spend the evening at his home. Without telling me what company I should meet, he simply said that there were to be two or three young people beside me, and that he wanted Mrs. Bradford to know me. Up to this time, I had made comparatively few acquaintances in the town, and had entered, in a social way, very few homes. The invitation gave me a great deal of pleasure, for Mr. Bradford stood high in the social scale, so that Mrs. Sanderson could make no plausible objection to my going. I was careful not to speak of the matter to Henry, whom I accidentally met during the day, and particularly careful not to mention it in my father's family, for fear that Claire might feel herself slighted. I was therefore thoroughly surprised when I entered Mrs. Bradford's cheerful drawing-room to find there, engaged in the merriest conversation with the family, both Henry and my sister Claire. Mr. Bradford rose and met me at the door in his own hospitable, hearty way, and, grasping my right hand, put his free arm around me, and led me to Mrs. Bradford and presented me. She was a sweet, pale-faced little woman, with large blue eyes, with which she peered into mine with a charming look of curious inquiry. If she had said: "I have long wanted to know you, and am fully prepared to be pleased with you and to love you," she would only have put into words the meaning which her look conveyed. I had never met with a greeting that more thoroughly delighted me, or placed me more at my ease, or stimulated me more to show what there was of good in me.

"This is my sister, Miss Lester," said she, turning to a prim personage sitting by the fire.

As the lady did not rise, I bowed to her at a distance, and she recognized me with a little nod, as if she would have said: "You are well enough for a boy, but I don't see the propriety of putting myself out for such young people."

The contrast between her greeting and that of Mr. and Mrs. Bradford led me to give her more than a passing look. I con-

cluded at once that she was a maiden of an age more advanced than she should be willing to confess, and a person with ways and tempers of her own. She sat alone, trotting her knees, looking into the fire, and knitting with such emphasis as to give an electric snap to every pass of her glittering needles. She was larger than Mrs. Bradford, and her dark hair and swarthy skin, gathered into a hundred wrinkles around her black eyes, produced a strange contrast between the sisters.

Mrs. Bradford, I soon learned, was one of those women in whom the motherly instinct is so strong that no living thing can come into their presence without exciting their wish to care for it. The first thing she did, therefore, after I had exchanged greetings, was to set a chair for me at the fire, because she knew I must be cold and my feet must be wet. When I assured her that I was neither cold nor wet, and she had accepted the statement with evident incredulity and disappointment, she insisted that I should change my chair for an easier one. I did this to accommodate her, and then she took a fancy that I had a headache and needed a bottle of salts. This I found in my hand before I knew it.

As these attentions were rendered, they were regarded by Mr. Bradford with good-natured toleration, but there issued from the corner where "Aunt Flick" sat—for from some lip I had already caught her home-name—little impatient sniffs, and raps upon the hearth with her trotting heel.

"Jane Bradford," Aunt Flick broke out at last, "I should think you'd be ashamed. You've done nothing but worry that boy since he came into the room. One would think he was a baby, and that it was your business to 'tend him. Just as if he didn't know whether he was cold, or his feet were wet, or his head ached! Just as if he didn't know enough to go to the fire if he wanted to! Millie, get the cat for your mother, and bring in the dog. Something must be nursed, of course."

"Why, Flick, dear!" was all Mrs. Bradford said, but Mr. Bradford looked amused, and there came from a corner of the room that my eyes had not explored the merriest young laugh

imaginable. I had no doubt as to its authorship. Seeing that the evening was to be an informal one, I had already begun to wonder where the little girl might be, with whose face I had made a brief acquaintance five years before, and of whom I had caught occasional glimpses in the interval.

Mr. Bradford looked in the direction of the laugh, and exclaiming: "You saucy puss!" started from his chair, and found her seated behind an ottoman, where she had been quietly reading.

"Oh, father! don't, please!" she exclaimed, as he drew her from her retreat. She resisted at first, but when she saw that she was fully discovered, she consented to be led forward and presented to us.

"When a child is still," said Aunt Flick, "I can't see the use of stirring her up, unless it is to send her to bed."

"Why, Flick, dear!" said Mrs. Bradford again; but Mr. Bradford took no notice of the remark, and led the little girl to us. She shook hands with us, and then her mother caught and pulled her into her lap.

"Jane Bradford, why *will* you burden yourself with that heavy child? I should think you would be ill."

Millie's black eyes flashed, but she said nothing, and I had an opportunity to study her wonderful beauty. As I looked at her, I could think of nothing but a gypsy. I could not imagine how it was possible that she should be the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bradford. It was as if some unknown, oriental ancestor had reached across the generations and touched her, revealing to her parents the long-lost secrets of their own blood. Her hair hung in raven ringlets, and her dark, healthy skin was as smooth and soft as the petal of a pansy. She had put on a scarlet jacket for comfort, in her distant corner, and the color heightened all her charms. Her face was bright with intelligence, and her full, mobile lips and dimpled chin were charged with the prophecy of a wonderfully beautiful womanhood. I looked at her quite enchanted, and I am sure that she was conscious of my scrutiny for she disengaged herself gently from

her mother's hold, and saying that she wished to finish the chapter she had been reading, went back to her seclusion.

The consciousness of her presence in the room somehow destroyed my interest in the other members of the family, and as I felt no restraint in the warm and free social atmosphere around me, I soon followed her to her corner, and sat down upon the ottoman behind which, upon a hassock, she had ensconced herself.

"What have you come here for?" she inquired wonderingly looking up into my eyes.

"To see you," I replied.

"Aren't you a young gentleman?"

"No, I am only a big boy."

"Why, that's jolly," said she. "Then you can be my company."

"Certainly," I responded.

"Well, then, what shall we do? I'm sure I don't know how to play with a boy. I never did."

"We can talk," I said. "What a funny woman your Aunt Flick is! Doesn't she bother you?"

She paused, looked down, then looked up into my face, and said decidedly: "I don't like that question."

"I meant nothing ill by it," I responded.

"Yes you did; you meant something ill to Aunt Flick."

"But I thought she bothered you," I said.

"Did I say so?"

"No."

"Well, when I say so, I shall say so to her. Papa and I understand it."

So this was my little girl, with a feeling of family loyalty in her heart, and a family pride that did not choose to discuss with strangers the foibles of kindred and the jars of home life. I was rebuked, though the consciousness of the fact came too slowly to excite pain. It was *her* Aunt Flick; and a stranger had no right to question or criticise. That was what I gathered from her words; and there was so much that charmed me

in this fine revelation of character, that I quite lost sight of the fact that I had been snubbed.

"She has a curious name, any way," I said.

At this her face lighted up, and she exclaimed: "Oh! I'll tell you all about that. When I was a little girl, ever so much smaller than I am now, we had a minister in the house. You know mamma takes care of everybody, and when the minister came to town he came here, because nobody else would have him. He stayed here ever so long, and used to say grace at the table and have prayers. Aunt Flick was sick at the time, and he used to pray every morning for our poor afflicted sister and papa was full of fun with her, just to keep up her courage, I suppose, and called her 'Flicted,' and then he got to calling her 'Flick' for a nickname, and now we all call her Flick."

"But does she like it?"

"Oh, she's used to it, and don't mind."

Millie had closed her book, and sat with it on her lap, her large black eyes looking up into mine in a dreamy way.

"There's one thing I should like to know," said Millie, "and that is, where all the books came from. Were they always here, like the ground, or did somebody make them?"

"Somebody made them," I said.

"I don't believe it," she responded.

"But if nobody made them, how did they come here?"

"They are real things: somebody found them."

"No, I've seen men who wrote books, and women too," I said.

"How did they look?"

"Very much like other people."

"And did they act like other people?"

"Yes."

"Well, that shows that they found them. They are humbugs."

I laughed, and assured her that she was mistaken.

"Well," said she, "if anybody can make books I can; and if I don't get married and keep house I shall."

Very much amused, I asked her which walk of life she would prefer.

"I think I should prefer to be married."

"You are sensible," I said.

"Not to any boy or young man, though," responded the child, with peculiar and suggestive emphasis.

"And why not?"

"They are so silly;" and she gave her curls a disdainful toss. "I shall marry a big man like papa, with gray whiskers—somebody that I can adore, you know."

"Well, then, I think you had better not be married," I replied. "Perhaps, after all, you had better write books."

"If I should ever write a book," said Millie, looking out of the window, as if she were reviewing the long chain of characters and incidents of which it was to be composed, "I should begin at the foundation of the world, and come up through Asia, or Arabia, or Cappadocia . . . and stop under palm-trees . . . and have a lot of camels with bells. . . . I should have a young man with a fez and an old man with a long beard, and a chibouk, and a milk-white steed. . . . I should have a maiden too beautiful for anything, and an Arab chieftain with a military company on horseback, kicking up a great dust in the desert, and coming after her. . . . And then I should have some sort of an escape, and I should hide the maiden in a tower somewhere on the banks of the Danube. . . . And then I'm sure I don't know what I should do with her."

"You would marry her to the young man with the fez, wouldn't you?" I suggested.

"Perhaps—if I didn't conclude to kill him."

"You couldn't be so cruel as that," I said.

"Why, that's the fun of it: you can stab a man right through the heart in a book, and spill every drop of his blood without hurting him a particle."

"Well," I said, "I don't see but you have made a book already."

"Would that really be a book?" she asked, looking eagerly into my face.

"I should think so," I replied.

"Then it's just as I thought it was. I didn't make a bit of it. I saw it. I found it. They're everywhere, and people see them, just like flowers, and pick them up and press them."

It was not until years after this that with my slower masculine intellect and feebler instincts I appreciated the beauty of this revelation and the marvelous insight which it betrayed. These crude tropical fancies she could not entertain with any sense of ownership or authorship. They came of themselves, in gorgeous forms and impressive combinations, and passed before her vision. She talked of what she saw—not of what she made. I was charmed by her vivacity, acuteness, frankness and spirit, and really felt that the older persons at the other end of the drawing-room were talking common-places compared with Millie's utterances. We conversed a long time upon many things; and what impressed me most, perhaps, was that she was living the life of a woman and thinking the thoughts of a woman—incompletely, of course, and unrecognized by her own family!

When we were called to tea, she rose up quickly and whispered in my ear: "I like to talk with you." As she came around the end of the ottoman I offered her my arm, in the manner with which my school habits had familiarized me. She took it without the slightest hesitation, and put on the air of a grand lady.

"Why this is like a book, isn't it?" said she. Then she pressed my arm, and said: "notice Aunt Flick, please."

Aunt Flick had seen us from the start, and stood with elevated nostrils. The sight was one which evidently excited her beyond the power of expression. She could do nothing but sniff as we approached her. I saw a merry twinkle in Mr. Bradford's eyes, and noticed that as he had Claire on his arm, and Henry was leading out Mrs. Bradford, Aunt Flick was left

alone. Without a moment's thought, I walked with Millie straight to her, and offered her my other arm.

Aunt Flick was thunder-struck, and at first could only say: "Well! well! well!" with long pauses between. Then she found strength to say: "For all the world like a pair of young monkeys! No, I thank you; when I want a cane I won't choose a corn-stalk. I've walked alone in the world so far, and I think I can do it the rest of the way."

So Aunt Flick followed us out, less vexed than amused, I am sure.

There are two things which, during all my life, have been more suggestive to me of home comforts and home delights than any others, viz.: A blazing fire upon the hearth, and the odor of fresh toast. I found both in Mrs. Bradford's supper-room, for a red-cheeked lass with an old-fashioned toasting-jack in her hand was browning the whitest bread before our eyes, and preparing to bear it hot to our plates. The subtle odor had reached me first in the far corner of the drawing-room, and had grown more stimulating to appetite and the sense of social and home comfort as I approached its source.

The fire upon the hearth is the center and symbol of the family life. When the fire in a house goes out, it is because the life has gone out. Somewhere in every house it burns, and burns, in constant service; and every chimney that sends its incense heavenward speaks of an altar inscribed to Love and Home. And when it ceases to burn, it is because the altar is forsaken. Bread is the symbol of that beautiful ministry of God to human sustenance, which, properly apprehended, transforms the homeliest meal into a sacrament. What wonder, then, that when the bread of life and the fire on the hearth meet, they should interpret and reveal each other in an odor sweeter than violets—an odor so subtle and suggestive that the heart breathes it rather than the sense!

This is all stuff and sentiment, I suppose; but I doubt whether the scent of toast has reached my nostrils since that evening without recalling that scene of charming domestic life

and comfort. It seemed as if all the world were in that room—and, indeed, it was all there—all that, for the hour, we could appropriate.

As we took our seats at the table, I found myself by the side of Millie and opposite to Aunt Flick. Then began on the part of the latter personage, a pantomimic lecture to her niece. First she straightened herself in her chair, throwing out her chest and holding in her chin—a performance which Millie imitated. Then she executed the motion of putting some stray hair behind her ear. Millie did the same. Then she tucked an imaginary napkin into her neck. Millie obeyed the direction thus conveyed. Then she examined her knife, and finding that it did not suit her, sent it away and received one that did.

In the mean time, Mrs. Bradford had begun to dispense the hospitalities of the table. She was very cheerful; indeed, she was so happy herself that she overflowed with assiduities that ran far into superfluities. She was afraid the toast was not hot, or that the tea was not sweet enough, or that she had forgotten the sugar altogether, or that everybody was not properly waited upon and supplied. I could see that all this rasped Aunt Flick to desperation. The sniffs, which were light at first, grew more impatient, and after Mrs. Bradford had urged half a dozen things upon me that I did not want, and was obliged to decline, the fiery spinster burst out with:

"Wouldn't you like to read the Declaration of Independence? Wouldn't you like to repeat the Ten Commandments? Wouldn't you like a yard of calico? Do have a spoon to eat your toast with? Just a trifle more salt in your tea, please?"

All this was delivered without the slightest hesitation, and with a rapidity that was fairly bewildering. Poor Millie was overcome by the comical aspect of the matter, and broke out into an irrepressible laugh, which was so hearty that it became contagious, and all of us laughed together except Aunt Flick, who devoted herself to her supper with imperturbable gravity.

"Why, Flick, dear!" was all that Mrs. Bradford could say

to this outburst of scornful criticism upon her well-meant courtesies.

Just as we were recovering from our merriment, there was a loud knock at the street door. The girl with the toasting-jack dropped her implement to answer the unwelcome summons. We all involuntarily listened, and learned from his voice that the intruder was a man. We heard him enter the drawing-room, and then the girl came in and said that Mr. Grimshaw had called upon the family. In the general confusion that followed the announcement, Millie leaned over to me and said: "It's the very man who used to pray for Aunt Flick."

Mr. Bradford, of course, brought him to the tea-table at once, where room was made for him by the side of Aunt Flick, and a plate laid. The first thing he did was to swallow a cup of hot tea almost at a gulp, and to send back the empty vessel to be refilled. Then he spread with butter a whole piece of toast, which disappeared in a wonderfully brief space of time. Until his hunger was appeased he did not seem disposed to talk, replying to such questions as were propounded to him concerning himself and his family in monosyllables.

Rev. Mr. Grimshaw was the minister of a struggling Congregational church in Bradford. He had been hard at work for half a dozen years with indifferent success, waiting for some manifestation of the Master which would show him that his service and sacrifice had been accepted. I had heard him preach at different times during my vacation visits, though Mrs. Sanderson did not attend upon his ministry; and he had always impressed me as a man who was running some sort of a machine. He had a great deal to say about "the plan of salvation" and the doctrines covered by his creed. I cannot aver that he ever interested me. Indeed, I may say that he always confused me. Religion, as it had been presented to my mind, had been a simple thing—so simple that a child might understand it. My Father in Heaven loved me; Jesus Christ had died for me. Loving both, trusting both, and serving both by worship, and by affectionate and helpful good-

will toward all around me was religion, as I had learned it; and I never came from hearing one of Mr. Grimshaw's sermons without finding it difficult to get back upon my simple ground of faith. Religion, as he preached it, was such a tremendous and such a mysterious thing in its beginnings; it involved such a complicated structure of belief; it divided God into such opposing forces of justice and mercy; it depended upon such awful processes of feeling; it was so much the product of a profoundly ingenious scheme, that his sermons always puzzled me.

As he sat before me that evening, pale-faced and thin, with his intense, earnest eyes and solemn bearing and self-crucified expression, I could not doubt his purity or his sincerity. There was something in him that awoke my respect and my sympathy.

Our first talk touched only common-places, but as the meal drew toward its close he ingeniously led the conversation into religious channels.

"There is a very tender and solemn state of feeling in the church," said Mr. Grimshaw, "and a great deal of self-examination and prayer. The careless are beginning to be thoughtful, and the backsliders are returning to their first love. I most devoutly trust that we are going to have a season of refreshment. It is a time when all those who have named the name of the Lord should make themselves ready for His coming."

Aunt Flick started from her chair exactly as if she were about to put on her hat and cloak; and I think that was really her impulse; but she sat down again and listened intently.

I could not fail to see that this turn in the conversation was not relished by Mr. Bradford; but Mrs. Bradford and Aunt Flick were interested, and I noticed an excited look upon the faces of both Henry and Claire.

Mrs. Bradford, in her simplicity, made a most natural response to the minister's communication in the words: "You must be exceedingly delighted, Mr. Grimshaw." She said this very sweetly, and with her cheerful smile making her whole countenance light.

"Jane Bradford!" exclaimed Aunt Flick, "I believe you would smile if anybody were to tell you the judgment-day had come."

Mrs. Bradford did not say this time: "Why, Flick, dear!" but she said with great tenderness: "When I remember who is to judge me, and to whom I have committed myself, I think I should."

"Well, I don't know how anybody can make light of such awful things," responded Aunt Flick.

"Of course, I am rejoiced," said Mr. Grimshaw, at last getting his chance to speak, "but my joy is tempered by the great responsibility that rests upon me, and by a sense of the lost condition of the multitudes around me."

"In reality," Mr. Bradford broke in, "you don't feel quite so much like singing as the angels did when the Saviour came to redeem the world. But then, they probably had no such sense of responsibility as you have. Perhaps they didn't appreciate the situation. It has always seemed to me, however, as if that which would set an angel singing—a being who ought to see a little further forward and backward than we can, and a little deeper down and higher up—ought to set men and women singing. I confess that I don't understand the long faces and the superstitious solemnities of what is called a season of refreshment. If the Lord is with his own, they ought to be glad and give him such a greeting as will induce him to remain. I really do not wonder that he flies from many congregations that I have seen, or that he seems to resist their entreaties that he will stay. Half the prayers that I hear sound like abject beseechings for the presence of One who is very far off, and very unwilling to come."

This free expression on the part of Mr. Bradford would have surprised me had I not just learned that the minister had at one time been a member of his family, with whom he had been on familiar terms; yet I knew that he did not profess to be a religious man, and that his view of the matter, whether sound or otherwise, was from the outside. There was a subtle touch of

satire in his words, too, that did not altogether please me; but I did not see what reply could be made to it.

Aunt Flick was evidently somewhat afraid of Mr. Bradford, and simply said: "I hope you will remember that your child is present."

"Yes, I do remember it," said he, "and what I say about it is as much for her ears as for anybody's. And I remember too, that, during all my boyhood, I was made afraid of religion. I wish to save her, if I can, from such a curse. I have read that when the Saviour was upon the earth, he took little children in His arms and blessed them, and went so far as to say that of such was the kingdom of heaven. If He were to come to the earth again, He would be as apt to take my child upon His knee as any man's and bless her, and repeat over her the same words; and if He manifests His presence among us in any way I do not wish to have her kept away from Him by the impression that there is something awful in the fact that He is here. My God! if I could believe that the Lord of Heaven and Earth were really in Bradford, with a dispensation of faith and mercy and love in His hands for me and mine, do you think I would groan and look gloomy over it? Why, I couldn't eat; I couldn't sleep; I couldn't refrain from shouting and singing."

Mr. Grimshaw was evidently touched and impressed by Mr. Bradford's exhibition of strong feeling, and said in a calm, judicial way that it was impossible that one outside of the church should comprehend and appreciate the feelings that exercised him and the church generally. The welfare of the unconverted depended so much upon a revival of religion within the church—it brought such tremendous responsibilities and such great duties—that Christian men and women were weighed down with solemnity. The issues of eternal life and death were tremendous issues. Even if the angels sang, Jesus suffered in the garden, and bore the cross on Calvary; and Christians who are worthy must suffer and bear the cross also.

"Mr. Grimshaw," said Mr. Bradford, still earnest and excited, "I have heard from your own lips that the fact that Christ was

to suffer and bear the cross was at least a part of the inspiration of the song which the angels sang. He suffered and bore the cross that men might not suffer. That is one of the essential parts of your creed. He suffered that He might give peace to the world, and bring life and immortality to light. You have taught me that He did not come to torment the world, but to save it. The religion which Christendom holds in theory is a religion of unbounded peace and joy; that which it holds in fact is one of torture and gloom; and I do not hesitate to say that if the Christian world were a peaceful and joyous world, taking all the good things of this life in gratitude and gladness, while holding itself pure from its corruptions, and not only not fearing death, but looking forward with unwavering faith and hope to another and a happier life beyond, the revivals which it struggles for would be perpetual, and the millennium which it prays for would come."

Then Mr. Bradford, who sat near enough to touch me, laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said: "Boy, look at your father, if you wish to know what my ideal of a Christian is,—a man of cheerfulness, trust and hope, under discouragements that would kill me. Such examples save me from utter infidelity and despair, and, thank God, I have one such in my own home."

His eyes filled with tears as he turned them upon his wife, who sat watching him with intense sympathy and affection, while he frankly poured out his heart and thought.

"I suppose," said the minister, "that we should get no nearer together in the discussion of this question than we did when we were more in one another's company, and perhaps it would be well not to pursue it. You undoubtedly see the truth in a single aspect, Mr. Bradford; and you will pardon me for saying that you cannot see it in the aspects which it presents to me. I came in, partly to let you and your family know of our plans, and to beg you to attend our services faithfully. I hope these young people, too, will not fail to put themselves in the way of religious influence. Now is their time. To-morrow or next year it may be too late. Many a poor soul is obliged

to take up the lament after every revival: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved.' Before the spirit takes its flight, all these precious youth ought to be gathered into the kingdom."

I could not doubt the sincerity of this closing utterance, for it was earnest and tearful. In truth, I was deeply moved by it; for while Mr. Bradford carried my judgment and opened before me a beautiful life, I had always entertained great reverence for ministers, and found Mr. Grimshaw's views and feelings most in consonance with those I had been used to hear proclaimed from the pulpit.

The fact that a revival was in progress in some of the churches of the town, had already come to my ears.

I had seen throngs pouring into or coming out of church-doors and lecture-rooms during other days than Sunday; and a vague uneasiness had possessed me for several weeks. A cloud had arisen upon my life. I may even confess that my heart had rebelled in secret against an influence which promised to interfere with the social pleasures and the progress in study which I had anticipated for the winter. The cloud came nearer to me now, and in Mr. Grimshaw's presence quite overshadowed me. Was I moved by sympathy? Was I moved by the spirit of the Almighty? Was superstitious fear at the bottom of it all? Whatever it was, my soul had crossed the line of that circle of passion and experience in whose center a great multitude were groping and crying in the darkness, and striving to get a vision of the Father's face. I realized the fact then and there. I felt that a crisis in my life was approaching.

On Aunt Flick's face there came a look of rigid determination. She was entirely ready to work, and inquired of Mr. Grimshaw what his plans were.

"I have felt," said he, "that the labor and responsibility are too great for me to bear alone, and, after a consultation with our principal men, have concluded to send for Mr. Bedlow, the evangelist, to assist me."

"Mr. Grimshaw," said Mr. Bradford, "I suppose it is none of



my business, but I am sorry you have done this. I have no faith in the man or his methods. Mrs. Bradford and her sister will attend his preaching if they choose: I am not afraid that they will be harmed; but I decidedly refuse to have this child of mine subjected to his processes. Why parents will consent to yield their children to the spiritual manipulation of strangers I cannot conceive."

Mr. Grimshaw smiled sadly, and said: "You assume a grave responsibility, Mr. Bradford."

"I assume a grave responsibility?" exclaimed Mr. Bradford: "I had the impression that I relieved you of one. No, leave the child alone. She is safe with her mother; and no such man as Mr. Bedlow shall have the handling of her sensibilities."

We had sat a long time at the tea-table, and as we rose and adjourned to the drawing-room Mr. Grimshaw took sudden leave on the plea that he had devoted the evening to many other calls yet to be made. He was very solemn in his leave-taking, and for some time after he left we sat in silence. Then Mr. Bradford rose and paced the drawing-room back and forth, his countenance full of perplexity and pain. I could see plainly that a storm of utterance was gathering, but whether it would burst in thunder and torrent, or open with strong and healing rain, was doubtful.

At length he paused, and said: "I suppose that as a man old enough to be the father of all these young people I ought to say frankly what I feel in regard to this subject. I do not believe it is right for me to shut my mouth tight upon my convictions. My own measure of faith is small. I wish to God it were larger, and I am encouraged to believe that it is slowly strengthening. I am perfectly aware that I lack peace in the exact proportion that I lack faith; and so does every man, no matter how much he may boast. Faith is the natural and only healthy attitude of the soul. I would go through anything to win it, but such men as Grimshaw and Bedlow cannot help me. They simply distress and disgust me. Their whole conception of Christianity is cramped and mean, and their methods of opera-

tion are unwise and unworthy. I know how Mr. Grimshaw feels: he knows that revivals are in progress in the other churches, and sees that his own congregation is attracted to their meetings. He finds it impossible to keep the tide from retiring from his church, and feels the necessity of doing something extraordinary to make it one of the centers and receivers of the new influence. He has been at work faithfully, in his way, for years, and desires to see the harvest which he has been trying to rear gathered in. So he sends for Bedlow. Now I know all about these Bedlow revivals. They come when he comes, and they go when he goes. His mustard-seed sprouts at once, and grows into a great tree, which withers and dies as soon as he ceases to breathe upon it. I never knew an instance in which a church that had been raised out of the mire by his influence did not sink back into a deeper indifference after he had left it, and that by a process which is just as natural as it is inevitable. An artificial excitement is an artificial exhaustion. He breaks up and ruins processes of religious education that otherwise would have gone on to perfection. He has one process for the imbruted, the ignorant, the vicious, the stolid, the sensitive, the delicate, the weak and the strong, the old and the young. I know it is said that the spirit of God is with him, and I hope it is; but one poor man like him does not monopolize the spirit of God, I trust; nor does that spirit refuse to stay where he is not. No, it is Bedlow—it's all Bedlow, and the fact that a revival got up under his influence ceases when he retires, proves that it is all Bedlow, and accounts for the miserable show of permanently good results."

There was great respect for Mr. Bradford in his own household, and there was great respect for him in the hearts of the three young people who listened to him as comparative strangers; and when he stopped, and sank into an arm-chair, looking into the fire, and shading his face with his two hands, no one broke the silence. Aunt Flick had taken to her corner and her knitting, and Mrs. Bradford sat with her hands on her lap, as if waiting for something further.

At length Mr. Bradford looked up with a smile, and regarding the silent group before him, said: "upon my word, we are not having a very merry evening."

"I assure you," responded Henry, "that I have enjoyed every moment of it. I could hear you talk all night."

"So could I," added Claire.

I could not say a word. The eyes of the minister still haunted me: the spell of a new influence was upon me. What Mr. Bradford had said about Mr. Bedlow only increased my desire to hear him, and to come within the reach of his power.

"Well, children," said Mr. Bradford, "for you will let me call you such, I know, I have only one thing more to say to you, and that is to stand by your Christian fathers and mothers, and take their faith just as it is. Not one of you is old enough to decide upon the articles of a creed, but almost any faith is good enough to hold up a Christian character. Don't bother yourselves voluntarily with questions. A living vine grows just as well on a rough trellis of simple branches as on the smoothest piece of ornamental work that can be made. If you ever wish to change the trellis when you get old enough to do it, be careful not to ruin the vine, that is all. I am trying to keep my vine alive around a trellis that is gone to wreck. I believe in God and His Son, and I believe that there is one thing which God delights in more than in all else, and that is Christian character. I hold to the first and strive for the last, though I am looked upon as little better than an infidel by all but one."

A thrill, sympathetically felt by us all, and visible in a blush and eyes suffused, ran through the dear little woman seated at his side, and she looked up into his face with a trustful smile of response.

After this it was difficult to engage in light conversation. We were questioned in regard to our past experiences and future plans. We looked over volumes of pictures and a cabinet of curiosities, and Millie amused us by reading, and at an early hour we rose to go home. Millie went to her corner as

soon as we broke up, giving me a look as she passed me. I took the hint and followed her.

"Shall you go to hear Mr. Bedlow?" she inquired.

"I think I shall," I answered.

"I knew you would. I should like to go with you, but you know I can't. Will you tell me what he is like, and all about it?"

"Yes."

I pressed her hand and bade her "good-night."

Mr. Bradford parted with us at the door with pleasant and courteous words, and told Henry that he must regard the house as his home, and assured him that he would always find a welcome there. I had noticed during the evening a peculiarly affectionate familiarity in his tone and bearing toward the young man. I could not but notice that he treated him with more consideration than he treated me. I went away feeling that there were confidences between them, and suffered the suspicion to make me uneasy.

I walked home with Henry and Claire, and we talked over the affairs of the evening together. Both declared their adhesion to Mr. Bradford's views, and I, in my assumed pride of independent opinion, dissented. I proposed to see for myself. I would listen to Mr. Bedlow's preaching. I was not afraid of being harmed, and, indeed, I should not dare to stay away from him.

As I walked to The Mansion, I found my nerves excited in a strange degree. The way was full of shadows. I started at every noise. It was as if the spiritual world were dropped down around me, and I were touched by invisible wings, and moved by mysterious influences. The stars shivered in their high places, the night-wind swept by me as if it were a weird power of evil, and I seemed to be smitten through heart and brain by a nameless fear. As I kneeled in my accustomed way at my bed I lost my confidence. I could not recall my usual words or frame new ones. I lingered on my knees like one crushed and benumbed. What it all meant I could not

tell. I only knew that feelings and influences which long had been gathering in me were assuming the predominance, and that I was entering upon a new phase of experience. At last I went to bed, and passed a night crowded with strange dreams and dreary passages of unrefreshing slumber.

## CHAPTER IX.

### I PASS THROUGH A TERRIBLE TEMPEST INTO THE SUNLIGHT.

I HAD never arrived at any definite comprehension of Mrs. Sanderson's ideas of religion. Whether she was religious in any worthy sense I do not know, even to-day. The respect which she entertained for the clergy was a sentiment which she shared with New Englanders generally. She was rather generous than otherwise in her contributions to their support, yet the most I could make of her views and opinions was that religion and its institutions were favorable to the public order and security, and were, therefore, to be patronized and permanently sustained. I never should have thought of going to her for spiritual counsel, yet I had learned in some way that she thought religion was a good thing for a young man, because it would save him from dissipation and from a great many dangers to which young men are exposed. The whole subject seemed to be regarded by her in an economical or prudential aspect.

I met her on the morning following my visit at the Bradfords, in the breakfast-room. She was cheery and expectant, for she always found me talkative, and was prepared to hear the full story of the previous evening. That I was obliged to tell her that Henry was there with my sister, embarrassed me much, for, beyond the fact that she disliked Henry intensely, there was the further fact—most offensive to her—that Mr. Bradford was socially patronizing the poor, and bringing me, her *protégé*, into association with them. Here was where my chain galled me, and made me realize my slavery. I saw the thrill of anger that shot through her face, and recognized the effort she made to control her words. She did not speak at first, and not until she felt perfectly sure of self-control did she say:

"Mr. Bradford is very unwise. He inflicts a great wrong upon