

A Modern Priscilla.

A MEMOIR OF
MRS. MARK HAMILTON OLIVER
OF HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

BY
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"The Golden Bells and the Golden Crown," "Ye are Come ;
or, Heavenly Glories," etc.*



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MR. AND MRS. MARK HAMILTON OLIVER.

Preface

“ How shall we honour them—our deathless dead ?
How keep their mighty memories alive ?
In him who feels their passion, they survive !
In the heroic soul their souls create
Is raised remembrance past the reach of fate.”

THIS small volume, in memory of one of “our deathless dead,” has been written at intervals, long separated, snatched from a busy life. The work has been interrupted by more than one attack of illness.

This accounts for the lapse of time—over three years—between the departure from this life of the subject of the memoir and its publication.

No one knows better than the writer the crude and faulty character of the work ; yet he has this consolation : he has done his best with the materials at hand and the time at his disposal.

His thanks are due to the following ladies who, with others, have collected much of the material incorporated in the biography :—Mrs. F. SLEE, of Leytonstone, N.E., who was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Oliver from 1870 until the latter left England in the beginning of 1888 ; Mrs. CYRIL

Preface

BIRD, of Belleville, Ontario (Mrs. Oliver and she were like "Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord"); Mr. and Mrs. RICHARD IRVING, also of Belleville, Ontario, who were among the oldest and closest friends Mrs. Oliver had.

It is a pleasure to mention the help in proof-reading received from Mr. DOUGLAS RUSSELL, Weston-super-Mare, England, and Mr. ALEXANDER MARSHALL, of Prestwick, N.B. They were both well acquainted with the late Mr. and Mrs. Oliver, and revere their memory.

The writer's prayer is, that the little book—in spite of all its imperfections—may, under God, be made a blessing to many who read it.

"BONSHAW,"
PETERBOROUGH ROAD,
WAVERTREE, LIVERPOOL,
October, 1908.

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL BIRTH . . .	7
II. STUDENT AND TEACHER	13
III. SPIRITUAL WORK IN LONDON	18
IV. EMIGRATION TO CANADA, AND MARRIAGE . . .	26
V. HER HUSBAND, MARK HAMILTON OLIVER . . .	31
VI. "SHE SPAKE OF HIM"	37
VII. "APPLES OF GOLD"	43
VIII. "IN LABOURS MORE ABUNDANT"	52
IX. THE LAST YEAR	62
X. "THE WAY AND THE END"	68
XI. "FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN"	76
XII. "THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"	91

A MODERN PRISCILLA

CHAPTER I

FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL BIRTH

A.D. 1844-1857

"As gleam the stars from out the gloom of night,
As glows the dawn with orient beams of light,
As hush the winds after the tempest roar,
As die the waves to ripples on the shore,
So found my heart its peaceful resting place.
Not by my works, but through the wondrous grace
Of Him who died—who died to bring to me,
Without my labour, pardon full and free.
He found me, drew me to His loving side,
Said 't was for sinners that He bled and died;
Showed me His hands and feet, His bleeding brow,
Then whispered in my ear, 'Oh, trust Me now.'
I yielded to His love, in Him was blest,
He gave me peace, and in His love I rest."

—S. TREVOR FRANCIS.

THE subject of this brief memoir, Mrs. Mark Hamilton Oliver (née Elizabeth Phillips Tilly), was born on Lady Day in the year 1844.

Her birth-place was the ancient village of Friskney, in the parish of Wainfleet, in the fen-land of Lincolnshire, England.

Friskney is called in the Domes Day Book *Frischemi*, and is about fourteen miles from Boston. It is the principal village in the Wapentake of Candleshoe.

towards the close of the "Forties," when they removed to Forton, in Hampshire, Mr. Tilly's native place.

The Tillys were a pious people who came of a "godly seed," so that Miss Tilly had the double advantage of a pious parentage and ancestry.

From her birth she was made by her parents the subject of prayer, and from her early childhood she was placed under moral and spiritual instruction, which soon began to bear fruit in the young mind and life.

She had just entered her 'teens, when she was led to "understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Happy indeed are such as are drawn in early life to trust in the Saviour!

Some would think that at an age so tender, and especially in the case of one brought up as she had been, in the purest possible moral atmosphere, there could be no deep sense of sinfulness, and therefore no very great concern of mind about spiritual things.

But Christian experience serves to show that when the Holy Spirit shines in searching light into the inner life of one even of tender years and of the fairest and purest morality, then the evil nature within is seen in its proper colours and is manifested in its true character.

It is then that a real concern of mind is produced as to the need of a Saviour; and it is thus conscience and heart are prepared to seek and receive through Him God's free gift of Eternal Life.

In the beginning of the year 1857, a beautiful work of grace began among the young people frequenting the Baptist Chapel in Gosport where the Tilly family then attended.

Elizabeth P. Tilly had just spent the first month of her thirteenth year when, one day, in deep anxiety of mind, she went to a friend a little older than herself to enquire the way of salvation.

This friend, who was two years her senior, lived at Gosport, near Forton. Elizabeth opened her condition of mind to the young disciple of the Lord, when the latter wisely suggested a stroll into the country so that they might better have uninterrupted conversation on the momentous subject of salvation. What a lovely picture! Surely the Divine eye rested with complacency upon it!

After a long walk, the two English maidens reached a patch of woodland known as Rowner's Copse. It was in the month of April, near the close of it, when, in the genial climate of the extreme south of England, the buds, blossoms, and flowers open to the sun, display their beauty to the gaze and scatter their fragrance on the air.

The two girls retired to the open copse, and sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree. The only sounds around them were those of nature: the murmur of running water near by, the hum of numerous insects, and the song of birds.

The elder of the two opened her pocket Bible

FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL BIRTH II

and softly and slowly read Psalm lxxxvi. 1-7: "Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy," etc.

Heart to heart conversation followed the reading of verses 1-7 of the psalm. The youthful instructor dwelt particularly upon the words "plenteous in mercy" and "ready to forgive" (v. 15). To the best of her ability she endeavoured to show from them to her distressed companion the fulness of Divine mercy for the sinner, and God's willingness and readiness to forgive, the moment the Lord Jesus was trusted as the Saviour. Elizabeth saw and believed. God did "bow down" His ear to hear the heart cry of the child for salvation; and for His mercy's sake saved her in Rowner's Copse that April day.

The next occasion when the young friends met, which was a few days after the above incident, Elizabeth with outstretched hands and beaming countenance greeted her spiritual guide, assuring her she had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and now knew her sins forgiven, and as a result had peace with God. Peace well founded, Divinely given, and well tested by time.

Forty years after, on the anniversary of her spiritual birth, 29th April, 1897, she wrote:

My pilgrim record has been forty years of failure, met by forty years of faithfulness. In His grace He numbers my failures in years, but His loving kindness by "mornings," "evenings," and "moments."

It should be the earnest desire, the unchecked

longing of Christian parents, and the ceaseless prayer of such, for the early conversion of their offspring.

So much depends upon their finding a Saviour in early life, that it ought to be the heart's desire and prayer of all who have the care and control of youth that God would "work in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure" in saving them in their earliest years.

"Bestow, O Lord, upon our youth,
The gift of saving grace;
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place."

CHAPTER II

STUDENT AND TEACHER

A.D. 1858-1887

"Now in thy youth beseech of Him
Who giveth, upbraiding not,
That His light in thy heart become not dim,
And His love be unforgot;
And thy God in the darkest of days will be
Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee."
—BERNARD BARTON.

FOR some years Mrs. Tilly, who had been well educated, kept a day school for girls at Forton, so that the first few years of Elizabeth P. Tilly's school life were spent under the immediate tuition of her capable mother.

She had a naturally quick and intelligent mind, and was fond of reading and thought; and hence she made rapid progress in all her studies.

About three months after the event recorded in the previous chapter, in July, 1857, her parents again removed to London and settled at Stepney Green, E.

After a time spent in London with her parents, Elizabeth returned to Forton to a school for young ladies conducted by her aunt, Miss Tilly, where she remained for three years.

She was conscientious and painstaking in her work, which laid the foundations of a sound and practical education. She then became governess to some children for the next three years, 1861—

1864. The family whose children were under her care lived at Gosport, Hampshire, but occasionally travelled. The parents were Christians, and greatly admired the loving disposition yet firm, faithful ways of their governess, and her services were highly appreciated by them. Immediately on the removal of the family to London in the summer of 1857, Mrs. Tilly's health began to fail, and she gradually became a confirmed invalid.

For the long period of ten years she was an exceptional sufferer, Miss Tilly's student life being interrupted for a time by the illness of her mother.

Having returned home, she nursed her mother with tender care until the end came on January 24th, 1869.

At fifty-five years of age her sufferings, borne with cheerful patience, were exchanged for the joy and rest of the Lord's presence.

Mr. Tilly married again in April, 1871, and on the same day his daughter, Miss Minnie Tilly, was married to Mr. Small, the latter immediately after setting sail for Canada. Miss Tilly was now free to follow her avocation of teaching.

In the year 1867, the late Dr. Barnardo, founder of the National Home for Waifs and Strays, with the help of a few Christians known as "Brethren"—with whom he then worshipped—opened a Ragged School in a disused donkey stable in Hope Place, World's End, Stepney, E. Later, four houses were occupied there as a Mission Hall and School-rooms. Miss Tilly, then about twenty-five years

of age, in the beginning of 1869, was invited by Dr. Barnardo to become head-mistress of the school.

In this position she remained for four years, during which time the school prospered and increased. Having conscientious scruples about the way certain things were done in connection with the work, she resigned her position.

In addition to managing the school at Hope Place, she studied under a tutor preparing for Queen's Scholarship examinations preparatory to entering a training college, as she was not yet a certificated teacher.

In due time she passed her examinations successfully, and entered Homerton College, N., for training, in the month of September, 1873.

Her student career at Homerton—as might have been expected of one so gifted—was a brilliant one, and she succeeded with ease in carrying off many prizes.

At the end of her two years' course she was offered a post on the permanent teaching staff of the College, a position which she accepted.

In the year 1875 she became Lecturer under Professor Liddell, a position which she occupied until 1884. The Lectureship she was well qualified to sustain with dignity to herself and with profit to her pupils. Nine years were usefully and happily spent at Homerton, in addition to her two years' training there. She was thus for the long period of eleven years connected with the College.

In the autumn of 1884 she resigned the Lecture-

ship, and in the beginning of the following year she became head-mistress of Leman Street Day School under the London School Board. She entered upon her duties in the middle of January; and the following will show in what spirit she undertook them. On 1st February, 1885, she wrote to a friend in Canada, Mr. Richard Irving, whom she had known when he was a student at Harley House, Bow, saying:

I have been a fortnight in school, and have liked it much. The girls take so kindly to me, and the discipline has been no effort this week, so that I have been enabled to throw my energies into teaching, and to prepare for organizing the school, which in my opinion is sorely needed. I have been in better health this week. The Lord gives me alway the strength for what I *must* do.

Nearly three months later she wrote the same friend:

My Easter holiday is over, and I go back to school to-morrow. I have got a month of hard work before me, but just got a nice cheering word to-night from Psalm xxv.

She keenly felt her need of Divine assistance in the discharge of her heavy responsibilities. But her longings for the higher interests of her pupils were always uppermost in her mind, as many of her letters of that period show. Writing to the same friend (Mr. Richard Irving) in May, 1885, she said:

My school examination is to take place on 4th June. There is much to be done yet, and I need your continued prayers that I may be kept in peace. I am very apt to worry over my

children because they do not advance as rapidly as they ought to do. I feel now that they are not ready for examination, and my reputation as a teacher will suffer.

You will say—"Where is your faith?" I say it to myself continually. I am glad to tell you the children show increased interest in Scripture teaching; and indeed it is altogether pleasant as a change to be teaching children instead of adults, though lecturing is easier in some respects . . . How much I need patience, power, and unshakeable faith. Pray for a real spiritual work.

She was head mistress of the Leman Street School until the end of the year 1887, during which time it prospered under her care. Her teaching life ended with that year, which to her was one of many sad changes.

CHAPTER III

SPIRITUAL WORK IN LONDON

" How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea—that desert desolate—
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?
They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,
Ghetto and Judenstrasse. in mirk and mire;
Taught in the school of patience to endure
The life of anguish and the death of fire.

—LONGFELLOW.

SIDNEY Street, E., which runs north and south between the busy thoroughfares of White-chapel Road and Commercial Road, was a different place fifty years ago to what it is to-day.

Like all East End localities, it has gone down in status before the onward march of an alien population. The native element has receded as the foreign one has advanced; for the former will not live side by side with the latter. It is no mere racial or lingual matter which leads to the separation of the two elements of population; it is one of habits and ideals, which have nothing in common and which cannot therefore fuse.

Sidney Street with the districts around are to-day practically given over to foreigners, mostly poor Jews who have fled from continental "Christian" hate out of the Ghettoes of Russia, Germany, and other European countries.

Between sixty and seventy years ago the district around Sidney Street was a residential one in-

habited exclusively by English. About that time a devoted Christian, Thomas Freeman, purchased a garden at the rear of Sidney Square, upon which he erected a Meeting-house. There a body of earnest Christians met to worship and serve God; and were for fifty years a power in the neighbourhood. A feeble remnant of this church still exists.

In the year 1860 Miss Tilly joined the company of Christians with whom her parents were in communion. She was then in the sixteenth year of her natural and third of her spiritual life.

With the exception of three years spent as a governess in Cornwall, the Isle of Wight, and Hampshire, she was connected with the Sidney Street Meeting for the long period of nearly twenty-eight years.

From her youth up, she had been taught and valued those principles of communion and worship found in the New Testament, and practised by "Brethren." The estimation in which she held them was regulated by her loyalty to her Lord, and not by self-interest or the opinions or fear of others.

Hence she never wavered in her attachment to the *first* principles of the so-called "Brethren." She believed them to be of Divine origin, and therefore extremes either on one side or the other never affected her.

Laxity of conduct, with its dishonour to holy living, she knew nothing of, except as a thing to be dreaded and shunned. Legalism with its cold,

clammy touch could never lead her soul astray from her Lord, and His Word. Religious bigotry, which is the offspring of ignorance and carnality, her loving spirit shrank from with dread. She walked the "narrow way" in company with godly ones and the Lord.

For about three years, while she was a governess, she was deprived of the privilege of meeting with "Brethren," except for a few weeks twice a year when at home for the holidays. This deprivation she keenly felt.

On one occasion during these years while living at Gosport, she went for a week or two to visit some relatives at Lymington. When the Lord's Day arrived, anxious to be at His Table, she took a troublesome journey to Southampton.

Not knowing the place of meeting she made some enquiries, and was directed to a certain street. Heated and tired she arrived a few minutes late, and then to her sorrow she found she was in a "Darby" meeting, where, as she afterwards said, "I could take no place but the one I had been accustomed to—that of sitting 'behind.'"

Of the dreary time referred to in the last sentence she once wrote to a Christian friend similarly placed:

I do most heartily sympathise with you in the deprivation of the feast of remembrance—nothing makes up for that. I knew the loss for years, being where was none but an "Exclusive" meeting. My principles were not firmly established then, and I thought I need not cease to "keep the feast" on that account.

I was at every meeting in the back seats—you know how that feels. And on the first Sunday in the month I went to the . . . to partake of the "ordinance" of the Lord's Supper. That arrangement lasted two months. I failed both times to thoroughly enjoy the Lord's presence; which I had imagined I should realise more sweetly after the deprivation. And before the third opportunity arrived, the word was applied to me most powerfully, "God is a Spirit," etc. It was at once all clear as daylight. Spiritual worship where the Spirit was limited to one man's ministration, and where a man took the rightful place of the Lord at His Table—worship in truth when I was countenancing departure from the simple New Testament lines, and recognising a system organized by man! So I was delivered, and have never ceased to thank God for the test that was applied to my professed separation.

Her experience of that time led to the resolve never to take an appointment where there was not an Assembly in the neighbourhood with which she could have true communion.

During her long connection with Sidney Street Meeting she was rarely absent on the Lord's Day, and never except through indisposition or during holidays.

She was not only a worshipper of God but an earnest worker for Him. Her worship and her work went hand in hand.

For about twenty-seven years she conducted a Bible Class between the hours for Sunday School and the Evening Service.

During that period she held a service for young people one night a week, giving them instruction in the Scriptures and teaching them, with her father's assistance—who was himself musical—"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Neither in Dr. Barnardo's School, nor at Homerton College as student or lecturer, nor under the London School Board as head mistress, did she allow her duties to interfere with her Bible Class work at Sidney Street. She was always in her place at the appointed time, summer or winter, heat or cold, strong or weak.

Writing to a friend in Canada under date April 12th, 1885, she said:

I have had a happy day in school work. Yesterday I was at Camberwell and stayed all night. I was somewhat tempted to stay to-day and enjoy the meeting at Berea^{*}, but I felt it my duty to stick to my work at Sidney Street, and had reason to be glad that I did.

She added

In my Sunday evening Bible Class I am going through Proverbs on purpose to discover all that is said there about "wisdom" and the "wise." I have been much struck with the remarkable illustrations of so many of the proverbs that are to be found in Bible narratives, as well as the grand principles underlying what seems at first sight to be mere mottoes.

During these years it was her habit to take up a course of study with her Bible Class. Her study of "The Precious Stones of Scripture" is remembered to this day by some of her former pupils. She was a microscopist and mineralogist of no mean order, and hence such a subject in her hands would become luminous with truth and interest. She was greatly gifted as a teacher of the Word as well as in secular subjects.

* Where the late gifted William Lincoln so long ministered.

She endeared herself to her scholars in a phenomenal manner. Some of them are known to the writer of this tribute, and they speak in terms of the deepest affection of their departed teacher, and say they owe much, under God, to her instruction.

Her efforts in service were not confined to teaching, as two now aged disciples, who knew her intimately for a period of thirty years, recently testified: "She was ever ready to give her help to the Assembly, visiting the sick or those who needed sympathy or comfort. We can truly say she was a Phœbe in the church." Others too have borne testimony to the fact that from her early Christian days she was a "ministering spirit."

An outstanding feature of her many-sided character, manifested from her earliest youth, was her deep attachment for her friends. Her motto might have been—"Once a friend always a friend." One illustration only of her youthful attachment to Christian friends must suffice.

The late Mr. John Butland for many years ministered the Word of God in London, but chiefly in Sidney Street, where he was greatly beloved for his works' sake. She was greatly profited by his ministry, verbatim notes of which she used to take and pass on copies of the same to others, some to distant places. Many of them were sent to Canada. When Mr. Butland was taken ill it was a great grief to her; and her sorrow was deep when he

passed away in the year 1885. Of this event she wrote to a friend :

I have been giving thanks that he is at rest. I would not have it otherwise, though I miss him sorely. I marvel how he went through the last three years of his pilgrimage with so weak and suffering body. But the grace bestowed on him was not in vain; and in his labours more abundant than any we could engage in, he testified to the reality of the Lord's work and power. "Yet not I," might have well been his motto. We are as a gathering indebted to the Lord for his example, his exhortation, and his teaching; and it well might humble us to the dust that we have profited so little."

Several of her letters at this period show her strong attachment for three generations of the Butland family, and are replete with expressions of devotion to their interests, which illustrate this feature of her character.

Once when Mr. Butland was in Devonshire for his summer holiday, he sent Miss Tilly a beautiful fern, which she tended with care for many years. On the first anniversary of his death—February 19th, 1886—she took tram from Homerton to Bow to visit his grave, carrying the fern with her to plant upon it. When she reached the cemetery the gates were closed, and she had to return with her little treasure! Such incidents serve to show her deep attachment to her friends, of whom she had very many.

It was Robert Hall (1764-1831) when speaking of friendship said—"Friendship, founded on principles of worldly morality, may survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only

to a union founded on religion to continue through endless duration. This is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. It partakes of the eternity of God: it is spiritual, and therefore unchanging and imperishable."

CHAPTER IV

EMIGRATION TO CANADA, AND MARRIAGE A.D. 1888.

" O Will that willest good alone,
Lead Thou the way, Thou guidest best ;
A silent child, I follow on,
And trusting, lean upon Thy breast.

" God's will doth make the bitter sweet,
And all is well when it is done ;
Unless His will doth hallow it,
The glory of all joy is gone.

" O Will of God, my soul's desire,
My bread of Life in want and pain ;
O Will of God, my guiding fire,
Unite my will to Thine again.

" O Will, in me Thy work be done,
For time, and for eternity—
Give joy or sorrow, all are one
To that blest soul that loveth Thee !"

IN February, 1887, her aunt, who had for some years resided with the family in Shore Road, E., passed away. Mr. Tilly himself "fell on sleep" on 19th July of the same year. His last words—"peace, perfect peace"—were characteristic of his Christian life. Miss Tilly's only sister, Miss Minnie, immediately on her marriage to Mr. Small in April, 1871, had gone to Canada with her husband, and soon after two of her brothers emigrated to the same colony. The breaking up of her home by death, and so many members of her family being settled in the Dominion, led her to give up

teaching in England and turn her thoughts toward the West. In this she was also partly influenced by the state of her health.

After much prayer, she gave herself into the hands of her God as to her future path and place. Canada alone was before her. Satisfied with His will for her—be what it might—she prepared to leave her native land to settle among strangers. Though the future was hidden from her eyes, she went forth in confidence of spirit, because she had the consciousness of being set “in the way of His steps.”

Near the end of January, 1888, she left Liverpool on board the ss. *Vancouver* for the Dominion.

After a stormy and trying passage, she reached Halifax on Saturday, 4th February. The next day (Lord's Day) was spent on the cars between Halifax and Hamilton, which was to be her home during the remainder of her pilgrimage.

Hamilton, founded one hundred and four years ago, is the second city in the fair Province of Ontario; and is the fourth in size in the Dominion. It is situated on the south side of the almost land-locked Burlington Bay, at the extreme west of Lake Ontario. This busy city of about sixty thousand inhabitants lies on a rich but narrow plain between the Bay and what is known as “The Mountain,” which is a part of the high table-land extending between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Standing on the edge of “The Mountain,” the spectator has the city with its one

hundred miles of roads and avenues at his feet. In summer time, the lines of the latter are in a great measure concealed from view by the foliage of the almost innumerable maple trees which border them.

From the same point of view, the great plain (with its farm-houses, villages, orchards, and vineyards) lies stretched out in the clear atmosphere as far as the eye can reach, forming a panorama of beauty which, once beheld, can hardly be forgotten.

Amid such scenes of summer beauty and apparent material prosperity, Miss Tilly settled down to spend the remaining years of her earthly life.

The first few months were spent with her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Small, at their residence on "the Mountain."

On 12th February, the Lord's Day after her arrival at Hamilton, she met for the first time in the land of her adoption with Christians known as "Brethren."

At the close of the meeting she saw, for the first time, her future husband, and from that date an affection sprang up between them which deepened and ripened as time went by. In a letter written to a close personal friend after she had been a widow ten months, there occurs this passage on the subject of their first meeting:

The twelfth is a doubly marked day with me. On that day my dear aunt went from us, followed by my father on 19th July. The following year I met my dear husband on 12th February.

Later on to the same friend she wrote :

Hamilton set me by myself in his heart from the moment I entered the hall, in company with my brother-in-law.

She was married to Mr. Mark Hamilton Oliver in October, 1888, six months after her arrival in Canada.

At that time the marriage law of Canada required that the ceremony should be performed by an "ordained minister," though recently this power has been extended to recognised ministers of the Word in Assemblies of "Brethren." Therefore, in this instance, the nuptial knot was tied by Mr. George Anderson, a devout Baptist minister. A Hamilton paper of that date contains the following item :

In Gospel Hall, by the Rev. George Anderson, Mark Hamilton Oliver, of this city, to Elizabeth Phillips, eldest daughter of Thomas Tilly, London, England.

The union, which was "*in* the Lord" and "*of* the Lord" as well, was, as all such must be, a singularly happy one.

They settled in a home belonging to Mr. Oliver at 170 King William Street, which immediately became a modern Bethany, in which hospitality was lavishly dispensed to all who visited them.

One of the many positive marks demanded of an overseer of the Church of God is that he should be "given to hospitality"; "a lover of hospitality"; to "use hospitality one toward another without grudging."

There is perhaps no land on earth where Chris-

tian hospitality is practised more than in Canada ; and not the least among Christians known as "Brethren." It has always been and is to-day a strong feature of their simple life and service to entertain "strangers" especially — "brethren . . . strangers."

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver from the time of their marriage had an open heart and home for Christians of all denominations. Scores of such from America (North, South, and Central), Canada (East and West), the British Isles, Australia, New Zealand, and the far-off mission fields of Africa, China, and India, were taken in and ministered to in temporal and spiritual things. The cost, care, and toil which this entailed upon them were all freely and gladly given because the recipients "belonged to Christ."

In this and other ways their home became a centre of spiritual activity which made itself felt not only over Hamilton but far beyond it.

From it the sick and dying were visited, and dainties were carried to many a weary, needy sufferer. Above all, the Gospel of God, with its quickening, comforting message, was borne by them to many a sick chamber and dying bed.

The records of eternity alone will reveal how many first heard the Word of Life in saving power from their lips.

Christianity with them was no mere creed, or set of rules to regulate the behaviour, no church position ; but a life of service and love, the Centre around which it revolved was Christ Himself.

CHAPTER V

HER HUSBAND, MARK HAMILTON OLIVER

MARK Hamilton Oliver was born in Ireland—though not of Irish parentage—on July 8th, 1840.

His father, John Oliver, was a native of the cathedral city of Durham, England; and his mother's forbears were also English, being natives of Whitehaven, the largest seaport town on the coast of Cumberland.

In the same year in which Mark Hamilton was born, his parents emigrated to Canada and settled in the province of Ontario. He was reared amid scenes of beauty and fertility in Southern Ontario.

His parents were upright, moral people: consistent members of the Anglican denomination, but without any professed experimental knowledge of vital godliness.

When Mark was reaching the fortieth year of his age, a deep work of grace began in the family. It commenced in this way.

At the beginning of the year 1880, Mr. Alexander Marshall, a well-known British evangelist, visited the city of Hamilton.

In January of that year he began services in the Opera House which went on there and in other places in the city for eight weeks in succession, and a great spiritual awakening followed.

Among many who were brought under the saving power of the Gospel at that time was a sister of Mark Hamilton, who afterwards became Mrs. Hugill. She was the first of the Oliver family to become a true Christian.

During the winter of 1880-1 Mr. Marshall again visited Hamilton on the Lord's service. Miss Oliver after much persuasion at last got her brother to attend some of the meetings held by the evangelist.

The Holy Spirit, through the Word preached, convinced Mark Hamilton of his sinnership and need of a Saviour; he was thus brought into deep concern about his spiritual welfare.

His shield of morality, religion, and fancied security was pierced through and through by the arrows of the truth. He became deeply and painfully conscious of his true condition in God's sight. His concern of mind increased until it became almost unendurable; and he was in despair of finding relief.

It was then that God in His mercy unveiled to him the Saviour of sinners, upon whom he rested his weary burdened spirit, and thus found abiding peace of mind.

Mark Hamilton knew by the Spirit's witness with his spirit that he had passed out of death into life. This change was deep and manifest.

The year, month, day, and hour of his glad emancipation now stood out distinctly and for ever from all past time.

The day on which the change took place was January 1st, 1881, a glad New Year's Day to him, upon which he could have joyously sung, in the words of Bradley's beautiful hymn :

"I am Thine own, O Christ,
Henceforth entirely Thine :
New life from this glad hour,
New life is mine."

Happy indeed are those who, like him, have a spiritual birthday—a day which stands out in the memory and in the life from all others. But, alas! how many live and die without such a natal day.

From that time onward he not only became a humble-minded follower of the Lord Jesus, but was used to lead others to Him. Though possessed of no distinctive gifts of speech or address, yet his quiet, unassuming manner, backed by his transparent sincerity and truly godly life, gave him power with men.

Thus he often succeeded in reaching people when others, perhaps more gifted, failed. One only out of many instances of this kind can be given here.

While pursuing his occupation he one day called at a house in Napier Street to enquire after a defaulter with the firm he served. In response to his knock at the door a feeble voice from within called, "Come in!" He entered the house, and in a room found a sick man of about thirty-nine years of age and in the last stages of consumption. The poor sufferer was dying without a ray of hope to illumine the dark future.

Up to that time he had persistently refused to allow any "minister" or "religious" person to visit him. He wished to die, he said, as he had lived. This day he was alone; and an opportunity was thus given his visitor to speak freely to him.

Mr. Oliver, in his gentle, sympathetic manner told the poor sufferer of the love of God to men and of the fulness of salvation in His Son Jesus Christ, whom He had sent on their behalf.

The man's heart was touched as he listened to the glad tidings, and he begged his visitor to call again. This invitation was gladly responded to; and each visit Mr. Oliver paid tended to deepen in the mind of the dying man his need of a Saviour, and a hope He might be found. Under the Spirit's influence he soon became an earnest seeker after salvation. Just three weeks before his dissolution he became by faith a "new creature in Christ Jesus," and until he passed away he gave a true and glad testimony to his faith and hope in God.

Such-like incidents might be multiplied, showing how this pious man, with no gift for public ministry of the Word, was used of God in private conversation in leading men to the Saviour.

Husband and wife were greatly used in Hamilton in visiting the sick and dying, and many such were led out of darkness into light through their visits.

It has often been observed that the English mind is tolerant and unsuspicious. The Olivers

possessed the mental cast of their race in no small degree.

Especially was this so in Mrs. Oliver's case; and this frequently laid her open to suspicion from some whose mental and spiritual furniture was of a different or scantier description.

It was not alone their broad, tolerant mind that made them so attractive to true Christians of various denominations in the city of Hamilton; it was their warm, loving spirituality that drew so many unto them and made their home the centre of gathering to such as longed for help and sought spiritual comfort and edification.

For a period of twelve years and six months they lived together as husband and wife, and each year was happier than the past, because it saw their spiritual life deepening and their usefulness in Hamilton extending.

Towards the end of the century Mr. Oliver's health manifestly began to fail. He had several attacks of painful illness; but God, in answer to much intercession, raised him up each time. It was evident to many that such attacks had weakened his physical constitution.

In the middle of April, 1901, he was again taken seriously ill, and after four days of intense suffering borne with rare patience he passed into the presence of God on the 19th day of that month.

His sister, Mrs. Hugill, the night before his departure, said to him: "I trust God will raise you up again to us."

His reply was : "If not—there is nothing—I am—more certain of—than when—absent from the body—I shall be—present with the Lord."

The following morning he was with the One whom he had loved and served for over twenty years. Many tears were shed in the city when the news went forth that Hamilton Oliver had passed away.

That husband and wife had had some premonition of his approaching end is evident from a letter written by his beloved widow a year after the event :

How Hamilton and I prayed together for the Lord to give him strength to go up once more to His table! and three times he had to make the attempt before he could finish dressing, and then only just in time. It is a comfort that we kept the feast together that last day on earth.

A year after the sad event she wrote to her friend, Mrs. Cyril Bird, whose beloved husband laid down his life in the mission field of Central Africa :

I am still thanking Him for His grace to my dear one, and the "fulness of joy" he is experiencing in that blessed presence. I feared as the sense of loneliness and widowhood increased I might be tempted to retract in thought the willingness with which I yielded Him my best. But praise Him! He giveth more grace, and my sacrifice has already "turned to ashes" and I have joy. You and I can so enter into each other's feelings; only I always remember that you had so many long months with the Lord as almost your sole comforter, while I had so much ready sympathy.

You at anyrate know the source whence you received *all* the comfort you realized. I think I did too, though the channels were so numerous and so sweet. But we both truly loved, and truly love, our dear ones, and rejoice because they have gone "to the Father."

CHAPTER VI

"SHE SPAKE OF HIM"

"She never won the voice of popular praise,
But, counting earthly triumphs as but dross,
Seeking to keep her Saviour's perfect ways,
Bearing in the still path His blessed cross,
She made her life, while with us here she trod,
A consecration to the will of God!"

—PHOEBE CAREY.

A GOOD story is told of the late Earl of Kintore, a British nobleman of somewhat blunt manners, but of sincere and deep piety. On one occasion he had a number of friends dining with him, among whom were three clergymen. At the close of a religious conversation in which the three ministers had taken a prominent part, the Earl, in summing up the substance of the debate, made the following pertinent remarks: "You, Sir" (pointing to one of the clerics), "have said much about 'She'—the church—and what she teaches. And you, Sir" (pointing to the second), "have said a great deal about 'It'—doctrine; but this one" (indicating the third) "has been speaking about 'Him'—Himself, the Lord Jesus—and I confess I like what he has said the best."

There is a vital difference between "She," "It," and "Him."

It would be a comparatively easy matter for one acquainted with mere "churchianity" to dwell with eloquence and pride upon church position,

teaching, and practice, as it would be for one theologically inclined to expatiate upon truth, doctrine, and discipline. But a spiritually-minded Christian alone would find delight in speaking about the Lord Himself: His person, worth, and His work.

To be able to do the last three things, at least would be necessary a personal acquaintance *with* Him as Saviour and Lord, a true love *for* Him, and present communion *with* Him.

A truly Christ-centred soul will be enabled to speak of Him to others; and more, will live for Him to whom it is anchored by faith. Such a one was Mrs. Oliver.

Under date January 20th, 1902, she penned to the writer the following sentence, which gave birth to the title of this chapter: "'Teachers of good things.' I want to be one of those and, like Anna, always to speak 'of Him.'" Always to speak of Him!

With her this was no mere pious expression without feeling or power; or one the outcome of a momentary emotional impulse; but that which had been her earnest desire from that April day in 1857. For a period of forty-seven years she habitually "spoke of Him" whom her soul supremely loved. He, the Lord, was her thought, her theme, and delight. He was her constant thought, her theme in private conversation, the subject of her letters to her friends, and the centre and soul of her ministry of the Word.

An Englishman, during the time Samuel Rutherford was Professor and Principal at St. Andrews, visiting the place, said—"I came to Irvine and heard a well-favoured proper old man [David Dixon], with a long beard, and that man showed me all my heart. Then I went to St. Andrews, where I heard a great majestic-looking man [R. Blair], and he showed me the majesty of God. After him I heard a little fair man [Rutherford], and he showed me the loveliness of Christ." It was Mrs. Oliver's delight to point to His beauty.

Her rare knowledge of the Scriptures, her retentive memory, her gifts of clearness of thought and power of language, were all used to exalt her Lord, and to lead others to behold His beauty.

One who has herself known much of true service—and suffering too—for her Lord in the far-off mission fields of Africa, wrote concerning Mrs. Oliver:

How delighted she was to go into His presence, and how delighted was He—our Lord whom she loved—to have her and welcome her home. She was so in love with her Lord that she found Him in almost every verse of the Scriptures. Why, O why, are the choicest gems so little valued and appreciated by the Lord's people! Even the worldling can stand aside and admire such!

She well knew what was meant by "abiding in Him"; for she lived in His presence day by day and hour by hour, and hence it was no effort on her part to speak and write of Him to others. It was her joy to do so. It was just this abiding in the Lord which made her what she was as

a many-sided Christian: simple yet wise, gentle but strong, yielding yet firm, tactful yet energetic, loving but fearless, patient under provocation from mere professors of religion, and silent and uncomplaining when others would have resented injuries, such as were sometimes inflicted upon her by coarse, unfeeling natures, which, alas infest every denomination.

For—like all holy souls—she was not without a knowledge of suffering from such as have no eyes to see spiritual beauty, or mind to appreciate moral worth; as well as from such as feel themselves rebuked for their self-centred lives by true-devotedness.

Much of the persecution which at all times falls to the lot of the truly godly from mere religionists and others is simply the outcome of jealousy. There is no denomination free from such excrescences of growth; only they appear the uglier and more out of place where are the greater claims to purity, piety, and truth.

Mrs. Oliver, because of her supreme love to her Lord, also loved His Word, and never tired of gazing upon Him reflected and unveiled therein.

To a friend of her girlhood, mentioned in the first chapter, less than two months before her departure, she wrote:

What causes joy in the heart like the Word of God? Truly we can make melody in the heart unto Him, as He touches the keys with His sayings. I have been thinking much lately of the staves and rings in the tabernacle vessels—the rings surely speak of eternity and the staves of the pilgrim journey.

The staves would have been utterly useless without the rings. By these could the holy vessels be carried, and by them alone. So we are continually exhorted to "lay hold on eternal life," the life which is life indeed. Thus only can we fulfil our mission and carry Christ, ark, altar, table, through this wilderness and manifest HIM.

To the same attached friend on the occasion of their last interview, she said:—"I simply *could not* sit and talk for an hour about trivial matters, as so many can. It must be the Word or nothing."

With unveiled face she had steadily and long gazed upon her Lord, as reflected in the clear mirror of the written Word, and had by the Holy Spirit's transforming power been "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

She had seen Him, reflected Him ; she spake of Him, and faithfully served Him.

It was no mere physical energy which bore her along in the path of service, for she was often "in weakness and fear and in much trembling"; neither was it the force of a strong will—though that was hers—nor the alertness of a quick intelligence, with which she was certainly endowed, but the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hers was a Spirit-filled life. And such a life is a pure enigma to the worldly minded—a reproof to the indolent—an offence to the legalist—a cause of suspicion to the morbid—an object of dislike to the bigot; but an inspiration to the spiritually healthy, and a strength to the truly godly.

Mrs. Oliver was pre-eminently a woman of prayer. Not alone for her personal or relative

needs did she daily wait upon God in her "closet," but for many scattered over both hemispheres. Especially did she intercede by name for evangelists, teachers, and missionaries. She had a long "Prayer List" consisting of names, male and female, for whom she constantly prayed. She did not confine her intercessions to those who were in her estimation morally and spiritually attractive. She prayed for some she knew who were legally minded and had crude ideas of spiritual things, and were unattractive and uncouth in their ways, though no doubt sincere. Her large heart embraced all she knew; and much time was spent by her in prayer for their welfare.

CHAPTER VII

"APPLES OF GOLD"

' Where bright imagination reigns,
The fine-wrought spirit feels acuter pains ;
Where glow exalted sense and taste refined,
The keener anguish rankles in the mind ;
There feeling is diffused in every part,
Thrills in each nerve, and lives in all the heart ;
And those whose generous souls each tear would keep
From others' hearts, are born themselves to weep."

HANNAH MORE (1745-1833).

MRS. OLIVER had the "pen of a ready writer," and she used her facile instrument for the glory of her Lord. None but He knows how many weak ones were strengthened, wandering ones restored, perplexed and distracted ones guided and counselled ; tempted, sorrowing, and bereaved ones upheld and comforted during a period of more than forty years by her letters.

The compiler of this volume has had exceptional opportunities of knowing something of the good she accomplished in her life-time by her scribal skill, which she constantly used in the interests of the Redeemer and His ransomed ones.

A constant correspondence with her for a number of years, and the opportunity of perusing a large number of her letters to many friends—letters covering a period of at least twenty years—justify him in saying that many of them are worthy to take a place side by side with some

which have been published and are held in high esteem by intelligent Christians in English-speaking lands.

Many a time while reading her epistles to various friends have the words of the proverb come to his lips: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a basket of silver" (Proverbs xxv. 11, R.V.).

It is hoped that a few short extracts from some of her letters on topics of common interest to Christians may prove a "word fitly spoken" to some tried, doubting, or sorrowing member of the "household of faith."

It may here be remarked that, while her nature was refined and sympathetic, the main-spring of her affection toward "all saints," but especially towards the tempted, tried, and afflicted ones, was the Divine love in her. It was His bestowment upon her who in name, nature, and essence is Love.

I

The first extract is *A Sweet Word on Song*, based upon the words, "I will sing and give praise":

"I am reading through the Psalms at evening prayer with my little family, and came to-night to Psalm lvii. Pleading, trusting, hiding under His wings formed the refrain. The body of the Psalm is in two distinct parts, passing from the crying to the singing: 'My heart is fixed. O my God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.' And is it not always so?

"The unsettled, distracted, fretful, restless soul can never sing ; but when the heart is fixed the melody floats and the vexing things of this life then only make enough dissonance to enhance harmony. My heart has been much out of tune often, and it may be that the sorrows which have this year come so fast, one after another, are just designed to tighten the strings for a constant strain of praise. Let us pray for each other that instead of occasional intervals of song, ours may be the lives of happy, joyful praise to Him upon whom our hearts' truest affections rest, and for whom we wait."

II

The second item is *A Word on Growth*, suggested by the words, "Consider the lilies how they grow":

"Let me communicate a thought that reached me the other day in 'consider the lilies *how* they grow.' It may have come to you before, but the tone of your letters tells me that you need to be reminded. The lilies grow without thinking about it. They utilize the influence of nature, because thus to do is inseparable from their life. We may imagine they enjoy (so to speak) the dew, the sunshine, and the juices of the soil—the result is growth and beauty. No Christian grows by telling himself to grow: he grows by feeding and enjoying. He is no more to take anxious thought for his spiritual than for his natural life and growth, but to be rooted and grounded in

the faith. He is to receive the speech that distils as the dew. He is to expand to all the influences of the True Light; the result—how big he is or how beautiful he is—never to trouble him at all.

“To toil and spin is to increase as a mineral by accretions to the substance—coloured often by an imitative morality. To grow (and only life can grow) is to assimilate without effort all the food, the air, etc., placed in his way by the very conditions of his life, as formed by the All-wise Provider of all supplies.”

III

The third quotation is *A Word on Buds, Blossoms, and Fruit*, and was written to one who was almost a foster-daughter:

“Let me thank you, dear, for all the loving appreciation of the channel through which the Lord has been pleased to refresh your soul and instruct your conscience in some little measure. Truly I am most thankful to be used by Him, and extol His grace that His omnipotence can use such an instrument in itself so unworthy. . . .

“There are very many over whose spiritual welfare I have yearned, and for whom I have laboured, who seem to have profited nothing, and others who despise the very effort made for them. For everyone whose profiting marks the Lord’s approval of the work, and thus evidences that He has given it to me and it is not self-chosen, I thank Him and take courage. I expect to see in

'that day' fruit of which the *bud* is too small now for the discernment of these earth-dimmed eyes."

IV

The next "apple of gold" is *A Word of Wisdom to a Mourner*, written as far back as May 8th, 1885:

"I feel powerless to comfort you, for no comfort can be given—no adequate comfort, I think. The Lord makes no mistakes, and it is too late to testify any failure or omission on your part, and you have confessed it to Him. Leave it to Him; He will explain all in the light of Eternity. But, my dear brother, do not contradict four facts: (1) We believe in the sovereignty of God, and (2) ought to know that He will not suffer a soul to be lost in consequence of our neglect of duty. (3) It is *we* who suffer loss, and rightly so. (4) We ought to feel humiliated, but we ought *not* to despair.

"What a subtle thing is self! When we cannot admire it, we fall to upbraiding and condemning it—anything so as to be occupied with it. Now you are upbraiding yourself as being without 'natural affection,' just because this bitter sorrow has not crushed you and rendered you unfit for work and incapable of feeling pleasure, etc. . . .

"There are some sorrows too great for us to dare to realize them—we are stunned by them; in fact, the greater sorrows of life forbid the manifestation of grief when but the surface feelings

of our hearts are touched. Only let us consciously roll the burden upon the Lord—not merely from off ourselves—that our moral energies be not paralysed. Another thing I would like you to think of—although, no doubt, you have done so already, for the heart is loth to give up hope—that is, that you cannot know what the Lord may have wrought in the last hours of an erring life. Your brother had heard the truth, and who knows but even *your* words, despised before, may, by the blessing of God, have received power and brought light to the dark soul.”

V

Here is *A Short Word on Service* to the same friend as the preceding :

“YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST.”

“You say you feel your unfitness for service. My dear brother, let me remind you that you have nothing to do with that. All your business is to follow the Master’s call. If He call, He will make you fit. If He chooses to use you, He thinks you a suitable instrument ; and He does not ask your opinion.”

VI

The next is *A Needed Word on Human Suffering and Divine Sympathy* :

“TOUCHED WITH A FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITY.”

“Your own weakness and suffering I am trou-

bled over, yet I doubt not it is precious discipline, because He rejoices in producing precious faith, and the trial of it is no experiment with Him. He knows what He is doing, and will get the fruit of His desire."

To the same friend later on she wrote:

"Well, even the nerves are His care, and their trial is surely for His praise, though we often feel as if it only revealed to us our failure. His tender sympathy in bearing with our infirmities is so ready, so full, and so unfailing. Would you rather have strong nerves or His grace (2 Cor. xii. 9)?"

VII

The following is *A Word on One of His "Little Ones,"* and speaks for itself:

"How is dear L——? Is he manifesting quite unmistakably that he does know now the precious Saviour? I do hope he will be spared the rough handling so many dear young ones get, and which so often lames them for life—or hardens them into years of sad unfruitfulness.

"A plant that should open to the sunshine shrinks into mere resistance to destructive influences.

"How terribly appalled some will be in 'that day' at the havoc they have worked while so perfectly satisfied with their own ugly and stereotyped ways with HIS little ones!"

VIII

The eighth extract is *A Word of Counsel to a Mother about her Son*:

"Perhaps we can all—even his mother—help him more by speaking for him to the Lord than by speaking to him. I think mothers need such wisdom at the time when their ministry to their sons passes from authority to advice and counsel. Some dear, anxious mothers lose ground just then. They could make more firm the sacredness and helpfulness of this relationship by seeing that manhood necessitates some changes of attitude, and that great display of anxiety either for body or soul is vexatious."

IX

The last "apple" we are able to give is *A Word on Peace-making*, and will be read with interest and, we trust with profit, by many:

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS" (Matt. v. 9).

"A dear friend of mine many years ago moving into a fresh town found the meeting there in a terrible state. . . . She dealt directly with the Lord. Her answer from Himself was: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' And she was impressed with the conviction that she was sent for that work.

"She was a gentle, unobtrusive girl, very warm-hearted, but with the plainest features I ever saw apart from an actually maimed or distorted face.

Her compensatory gift was an exceedingly rich, musical voice ; one that, once heard, could not be forgotten whether in speaking or singing.

She was well educated, and a talented, cultured musician ; but I think her voice attracted and her loving heart retained friends, for she was greatly beloved.

"Well, she set quietly to work, and after three or four years did not know any two in the meeting at variance, whereas nothing but contention, evil-speaking, and slander had divided the Assembly into fragments except in name. Was it not a noble work for God ?

"Many labour in the Lord, but she—like Persis—laboured much in the Lord ; and in work that few would have dared attempt, and fewer still would have had the intuition and patience to succeed in."

CHAPTER VIII

"IN LABOURS MORE ABUNDANT"

SAMUEL Rutherford (1600-61) was so diligent in seeking the welfare of those among whom he laboured in the Lord, that it came to be said of him: "He is *always* praying, *always* preaching, *always* visiting the sick, *always* catechising, *always* writing and studying."

Mrs. Oliver was "always abounding in the work of the Lord," yet between the Fall of 1901 and the Spring of 1905 she was "in labours more abundant."

Scattered over the beautiful province of Ontario there were and are many churches of "Brethren," most of which had their beginning in the pioneer labours of "faithful men" of British origin. They were mostly very small numerically, and some of them were situated in out-of-the-way places, and seldom had ministry of a highly intelligent or sympathetic type. For some years Mrs. Oliver, and others like-minded, had been deeply impressed with the need which existed in many of those small companies of Christians for ministry calculated to help wives, mothers, and daughters. And ministry on such subjects as a woman in Christ *alone* could impart. These impressions were from time to time deepened by letters which

often reached her from distant places where the poverty was keenly felt and where help was earnestly craved.

The condition of things indicated in such appeals led to much prayer and looking to God for guidance as to what her course of action should be in response to such requests for spiritual help. She foresaw that no matter how circumspectly she might act, or how certain she herself might be of the Lord's will in such a service, she would have to face opposition, and perhaps persecution, of a bitter kind.

In her best days she was but a poor traveller, and suffered much from headache even on a short railway journey. Still she was—in spite of this disability—so pressed in heart to go forth to serve the Lord among her own sex in some of the small churches which were scattered around Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the Bay of Quinte, that at last she set out, leaning in her weakness upon her Lord.

In a letter to the writer of this memoir, under date January 30th, 1902, she wrote:

I have taken my trial trip by rail. Mrs. Bird and I went to Brantford for a few days. I had three Bible-readings, and she a good missionary meeting. . . . The journey was quite enough for me; still I do not fear but that I can well take those short journeys with care. I know the Lord has not continued strengthening me in body without having some use for me.

He had use for her, and in many needy places.

In March of that year she visited Galt—another town like Brantford—situated in the Grand River Valley. In 1868-9 a great spiritual awakening took place in Galt under the ministry of beloved Mr. Douglas Russell.

Her meetings there were “parlour” ones, held in different homes, and attended by women from the various Protestant denominations in the town. To these women hungering for spiritual nourishment she was greatly blessed.

One of her inimitable Bible-readings given there was on Ruth the Moabitess, rough notes of which are appended as a sample of her wise and practical teaching. It is hoped that young Christian women especially, as well as mothers, may profit by it.

A BIBLE-READING ON RUTH.

“Mahlon and Chilion violated God’s law in marrying daughters of Moab; the result was that neither of them had the joy of having his wife confess the God of Israel.

“Orpah never left her idols, and Ruth did not cast in her lot with the people of God until after the death of her husband Mahlon.

“How did Ruth know that Boaz was in character what he should be, seeing that she was a stranger?

“First, She would notice his greeting to the reapers and their response—the confidence be-

tween them, and his godliness in business relations and ordering of his servants.

"Second, His care for her reputation and for her character and her comfort.

"Third, His personal address to herself, showing that it was her character and demeanour that had attracted and won him.

"Fourth, His real but unobtrusive attentions, and the patience with which he watched over her through barley and wheat harvest—never calling her away from her work, or making her and himself a butt for the remarks of the men in the field.

"Is it not very beautiful, too, that when afterwards he said, 'Let it not be known,' not a man of them wanted to tell anything? They all knew the sanctity of his life and character and the freedom from its counterfeit—sanctimoniousness.

"Fifth, The style of his presents. He was a wealthy man, and could have loaded her with jewellery, but the delicacy of his action, 'Go not empty to thy mother-in-law.'

"And Ruth is a pattern to young women: she has no thought of knowing best and managing her own affairs; of coming home some night to say she is going to have a home of her own.

"All through she took the wise counsel of her more than mother-in-law (Ruth iii. 5).

"The lesson of chapter iv. is that even this beautiful and godly courtship must not end in marriage while there is a shadow of a prior

claim. Boaz was determined to have everything perfectly righteous in the sight of men. Hasty betrothals and broken engagements should never be among those who profess to fear God.

"Is not the result beautiful? The couple had the fellowship of the people and of the elders, notwithstanding Ruth was a Moabitess. Had she been a *man* instead of the blessed happy 'weaker vessel,' she could not have been recognized until the tenth generation (Deut. xxiii. 3).

"Lastly, God, who had sought a godly seed, and had brought Boaz and Ruth together for the purpose, 'gave conception.'

"They did not happen to have so many children, etc.

"God's object in this matrimonial alliance was eternal—this was part of the ancestry of the Lord Jesus: the house and lineage of David: and it was as much in a sense to Naomi as it was to Ruth.

"Let mothers and daughters ask themselves at every stage of these things that are so flippantly dealt with often, 'What does this mean to God?'"

One happy result of her service at this time in Galt was the establishment of a weekly prayer meeting among the Christian women of the town, which led to a "revival" in the place in the beginning of 1903.

In February, 1903, she was again at Brantford serving the Lord. She was possessed of a vein of quiet humour which she sometimes used with

profit to her auditors; though she never gave pain or caused offence by its use. While there, several of the women who attended her meetings suggested that she might give them a Bible-reading on "Separation," from 2 Cor. vi. 19; vii. 1. At first she refused. None knew better than she did how often that portion of Holy Scripture had been tortured out of all shape and sense by applying to true Christians and Christianity what certainly belonged to Pagans and Paganism. At last she consented to give a reading upon it, concerning which she playfully wrote:

I tell you some were *puzzled* when I brought them to the point of what noun the pronoun stood for in "Come out from among *them*"! Whether they would be justified or willing to bestow the title of "unclean" upon one whom God had cleansed—the title of "unrighteous" upon those who could say from the heart, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu is all things to me." Whether when God said "Ye were *once* darkness," we could dare say to a fellow-believer, "Thou *art* darkness." Or whether we could charge with affinity to Belial those who were equally with ourselves members of Christ?

Such playful yet reverent questions were and are much needed in many places besides Brantford.

Patience and self-control were among the many spiritual qualities which she possessed. Both were called into exercise while at Brantford. One day, as soon as she had opened her "parlour" meeting, an "Adventist" present rudely began a rambling, unintelligent harangue on some of the peculiar tenets of that strange sect. Mrs. Oliver sat

perfectly silent and self-possessed until the incoherent "deliverance," which lasted for over half-an-hour, came to an end. She then reverently knelt and commended those present to the God of patience and dismissed the meeting. It was done so calmly and graciously, yet with such spiritual authority, that all felt they had been taught a lesson in patience and self-control which would not soon be forgotten. The last meeting of the number she held in Brantford on that occasion, resulted in the deliverance of two women from the delusions of the "Adventists." The city at that time seemed to have been a kind of "stepping-off place" for the numerous itinerants belonging to the sporadic sects from the States, such as Mormonism, "Millennial Dawn," Eddyism, Dowieism, Adventism, etc.; some of whose dupes attended her meetings on that occasion. Another of the places she visited on the Lord's service in 1903 was Port Dover, on the north shore of Lake Erie. It was during the busiest season of the year, in the time of harvest, yet she had two meetings a day for a whole month.

There were then only twenty persons at that time in the little church at the Port; and they were so widely scattered they could only reach the place of meeting by driving. The members in consequence usually only met once a week, on the Lord's Day. During the month she stayed there she went through the book of Ruth, the Epistle of James and the book of Revelation; also half through the Gospel of John and the

Epistle to the Hebrews, besides taking up several topical subjects of practical import. As a result of her faithful ministry at that time five women were added to the Church.

Some may wonder at the extent of the scriptural ground thus covered by her in one month's ministry there. The fact was, she was so conversant with her Bible she could intelligently run through the books of the New Testament in one evening, and that with much edification to her hearers. An example of her ability in this direction may fittingly close this chapter. It is the substance of one of her Monday evening Bible readings, and was written out by request of one of the members of the class.

THE EPISTLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In the Epistle to the Romans we have the Gospel of God.

In those to the Corinthians we have truth concerning the Assembly—the order of worship.

The Epistle to the Galatians deals with Law and Grace.

Ephesians gives us the Church in God's counsel and in her actual—that is, her heavenly—place; but high truth brings great responsibility, hence half the epistle is occupied with exhortation concerning walk.

Philippians—lovers of horses (Song of Solomon i. 9). Here we have the Church in service; it is the epistle of fellowship.

1. Fellowship in the Gospel.
2. " in service of faith.
3. " in the Hope.
4. " in giving and receiving.

In Colossians we have more than fellowship; we have identity—the unity of the body.

In Thessalonians we learn the power of the hope.

1 THESSALONIANS:

1. Teaching us to wait.
2. Making our crown of joy.
3. Establishing in holiness.
4. Comforting in bereavement.
5. Sanctification.

2 THESSALONIANS:

1. Sustaining in persecution.
2. Establishing in word and work.
3. Constraining to orderly walk.

The Epistles to Timothy, addressed to an individual concerning Assembly responsibilities and home cares, is largely occupied with individual position and difficulties; affords a guide for the "man of God."

That to Titus is occupied with the correction of faults by the voice of authority, and the maintenance of good works.

Philemon is the epistle of christian love; shows what the heart should be to fellow-believers whatever apparently against them.

The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the Word of God. Its object is to show the

inestimable value of the Old Testament Scriptures as testifying of Christ.

That of James, addressed to the twelve tribes, occupies a remarkable place dispensationally; will be most needful after the Church is taken away; yet for us contains practical truth as to faith expressed by works; its principles are for all dispensations.

Peter addresses us as strangers and pilgrims, showing our attitude with regard to

1. Our fellow pilgrims.
2. Those in whose land we sojourn.
3. The home for which we are bound.

I John is the Epistle of Assurance; it is especially in the Gospel and Epistles of John that we are taught that the saved have eternal life. A real acquaintance with these writings effectually preserves from doubts and fears.

The short epistle of Jude addressed to the sanctified is full of warning relative to the awful results of setting aside God's principles, and gives us the judgment of the lawless of every age. It is the summary of the dispensations. The doxology with which it concludes is the final note of the whole epistolary writings.

"Now unto Him who is able to guard you from stumbling and to set you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, might and authority, both now and unto all the ages. Amen."

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST YEAR

A.D. 1904-5

"Be faithful unto death ;
Christ proffers thee
A crown of life that draws immortal breath ;
To thee He saith—yea, and He saith to me—
'Be faithful unto death.'"

—C. ROSSETTI.

IT would be out of the question to attempt giving a complete itinerary of her journeys during the closing year of Mrs. Oliver's life.

Notwithstanding increasing years and infirmity it was perhaps one of the busiest of them all. She simply could not be idle; for she felt there was so much to be done and so short a time in which to do it.

During the last ten months of her busy life in pursuance of her God-given mission to women, she visited, among others, the following towns: Belleville, Brantford, Dundas, Napanèe, Peterborough, Port Dover, Simcoe, Toronto, and Trenton, bearing messages of "truth in love," to wives, mothers, and daughters—messages which were tenderly and lovingly given and were as eagerly and gratefully received.

In July, 1904, she took boat to the town of Belleville, which is situated at the mouth of the

Moir River at its junction with the Bay of Quinte. At that beautiful place she spent some time with her friend and fellow-labourer Mrs. Cyril Bird.

Mrs. Oliver's mission at that place was used in leading some to the knowledge of God.

She, in company with Mrs. Bird next went to the river-mouth town of Trenton, where they held meetings not only full of interest to the many who attended them, but which were fraught with immediate blessing to some.

In response to very pressing invitations she returned to Trenton in October and spent four happy weeks.

The following incidents are from one of her letters referring to the work there :

I had to borrow a pencil and compass, needle and thread of the girls to make my "tetrahedrons." When I had them ready I went out to the verandah where the girls—V—, aged seventeen, and A— and L—, aged ten—were at their fancy work. I showed them what I wanted the figures for, and had a special talk with them about the Parable of the Sower—the key to all other parables.

Then she goes on to say:

A— confessed with tears that her heart had never proved good ground. V— told me she had been saved last November; and L— said very little, but clung to me with both

*Cardboard figures with which to illustrate the "kingdom" parables of Matthew, chap. xiii.

arms around my waist. The next morning, when they were drawing their texts from the "gem-bowl," A—— drew "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." This led to a conversation: What was the gift—what it meant to have Christ and in Him eternal life—whose gift He was—and when we can say "Thank you" for a gift.

Thus did she "in season and out of season" serve the Lord in seeking to lead others to know Him. She continues:

Frequently during the Lord's Day we would say to A——, Can you say 'Thank you?'" and it would always be a sorrowful negative. On Lord's Day afternoon, when each one had drawn a text from the "gem bowl," then A——'s turn came; she drew one out; it was the same text as the day before: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" No one could speak for a minute or two. Then I said, "Can you say 'Thank you' to God now, A——?" The dear girl burst into tears and answered, "Yes, I can"; and raising her hands she gave an expressive "Thank you." "How is it you can now, A——, and could not before?" "Because I live." The father, mother, and other friends who were present, and melted to tears—tears of joy—bowed down and gave praise to God for "His unspeakable gift."

In a letter written to an old friend in England some months after her visit she said

The Lord gave four souls while there, and other tokens of blessing. I had ten meetings each week, and house Bible talks besides which kept us up till late at nights.

It will thus be seen that Mrs. Oliver's month's service for the Lord at Trenton was not in vain.

The "gem-bowl" mentioned in the preceding paragraph was a glass jar of about three inches

in depth and about nine in circumference. It contained texts of Scripture rolled up scroll fashion which had done duty on block calendars. The bowl was set on the table at meal times and each guest took out a text and read it aloud. Often helpful conversation followed the reading of the texts, as in the above-mentioned case.

From Trenton she went on to Napanee on the St. Lawrence River, and spent three happy weeks with Mr. and Mrs. Richard Irving, who were among her oldest and most cherished friends. While there, she suffered much from violent headaches, which at this period became almost constant.

The next place she visited was the spiritually-dead town of Peterborough on the Otonabe River, and had a series of Bible readings. Toward the end of the year she started for home, but the railway journey of seventy-five miles from Peterborough to Toronto was too much for her in her fatigued condition. So she had to rest in Toronto until her strength returned before she could finish the journey. She reached home in time for an Annual Conference which is held at Hamilton in January, and lasts for some days. During it she was, as usual, "entertaining strangers" and friends. Immediately after the annual meetings she resumed her work there. A paragraph from her last letter to the compiler of this tribute will give some faint idea of her labours for the Lord at that time, notwithstanding her

almost constant sufferings. Where others would have rested, she toiled; for she knew the value of time, and the need of buying up opportunities of doing good. She wrote:

Immediately after the Conference I resumed the usual meetings in Hamilton. Sunday and Monday meetings with the "sisters." Friday afternoon with the Christians from the denominations. Tuesday evening with some of our young men who come in for a Bible talk. These, with the "sisters'" prayer meeting on Thursday afternoon, and the regular evening meetings at the Hall—Wednesday and Friday—fill up time, leaving little for necessary care of home, correspondence, and visitors. I try to visit the sick and those I can help in any way on Wednesday.

Thus was the week filled up with service for the Lord.

Toward the end of February she spent seven or eight days at the ancient portage town of Dundas, and held two meetings daily.

She then went on to Port Dover, where she remained for two weeks, having two meetings most days. She gave addresses on the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, illustrated by models of the various vessels which her own skilful fingers had made. From this port on Lake Erie she wrote:

Here I am going on at the rate of eight meetings a week plus dining out and long Bible talks. I have the chart and a set of home-made vessels, and am pleased to report great interest and real concern of soul, but no conversions. On Saturday five unsaved ones walked to the meeting—two from three and a half miles distant—in pouring rain.

For some years her eyesight had been failing and it gave her great trouble while at Port Dover; but diminishing power of sight did not curtail her work though it rendered it more difficult. During the last months of her ministry, when taking an evening meeting, she was frequently obliged to refrain from turning to a passage of Scripture, and had just to quote from memory. It was no difficulty for her to do this, as the "Word of Christ dwelt richly in her in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Toward the end of March she returned home—but not to rest. If anyone had urged upon her the need of repose from toil she would—in effect—have used the words of the German poet:

"Rest is not quitting
The busy career;
Rest is the fitting
Of self to one's sphere.

'Tis the brook's motion,
Clear without strife,
Flecting to ocean
After this life.

'Tis loving and serving
The highest and best,
'Tis onward unswerving,
And this is true rest."

CHAPTER X

"THE WAY AND THE END"

"The steep hill grows steeper as slowly I climb ;
Yonder low roofing cloud veils the summit from sight ;
I have left the dear pastoral fields of my prime ;
I am old and lone on my way to the height."

"Yet an hour and the cloud will the climber unfold
But I know, yes, I know, that its curtain is thin :
And beyond it the rough path runs upward in gold
To the gate where my Lord waits to welcome me in."

—BISHOP OF DURHAM.

IT was manifest to Mrs. Oliver's close personal friends, that during the years of her widowhood she had rapidly ripened for the life to come. For some years her physical sufferings had increased, and her strength had in proportion diminished. It was also evident that she had grown weary on the homeward way, and often longed for its rest; though as yet she was wonderfully active. God loved her too well to allow her to outlive her usefulness; so she "laboured much in the Lord" to the end. One by one, some of her most cherished friends and pilgrim companions had passed away, and the loss on the journey she had keenly felt.

Her letters for some time—especially during the last three years of her life—had contained

many touching expressions of regret relative to those departed friends. They also recorded her impression that she too was nearing the end of the pilgrim path.

In one of them she touchingly wrote:

The Lord goes on gathering home His dear ones; it cannot be long ere He takes all together and completes the happy home circle.

Then again, writing of some who had recently passed "within the veil" she said:

What matters the loss of a few wilderness companions when we are almost *home*.

She closed her last letter to the writer in reply to a pressing invitation to visit her native land:

I do not suppose my way will be across the ocean, much as I should like to see my dear friends again. We shall soon be HOME.

She trebly underlined the last word. Two months to the day she penned it she was "at *home* with the Lord."

After her husband's death she used to spend the anniversary of it by his graveside—in the beautiful "God's acre" overlooking Burlington Bay. On the fourth return of the day—Wednesday, April 29th, 1905—she visited it for the last time.

On that occasion she had with her, her husband's well-used Testament, her own Bible and hymn book, and, as she sat by the mound which covered his remains, she read Psalm xlvii., Isaiah xl., and John xvii.; then, after some time spent in meditation and prayer, she sang Tompkin's beautiful hymn, beginning:

"Christ's grave is vacant now,
Left for the Throne above;
His crown asserts God's right to bless
In His own boundless love."

Thus in the holy exercises of reading, meditation, prayer, and song, was the heart of that April day spent by her.

In the evening, on her way home, she called upon a friend who was a widow, with whom she spent some time in prayer and praise; and was so drawn out in thanksgiving for some whom she had known who had, in recent years, died in the Lord at Hamilton, and was so tender in prayer for those who were left behind, that her friend, who had that day been greatly despondent, was also enabled to praise God.

It was Mrs. Oliver's habit so to abide in the presence of God, that she never seemed to have any cares or burdens of her own; and thus she was left free to "lift up the hands that hung down," and to strengthen the "feeble knees" of others of weaker trust.

She was one of those rare spirits of whom Myers speaks:

"Whose are those beautiful and holy faces
Lit with their loving and aflame with God?

"Ay, unto these distributeth the Giver
Sorrow and sanctity, and loves them well;
Grants them a power and passion to deliver
Hearts from the prison house and souls from Hell."

On Friday, April 21st, Mrs. Oliver and her companion, Miss Somerset, who occupied the place of a foster-daughter, visited Toronto. They crossed Lake Ontario by boat, and greatly enjoyed the forty miles' sail.

On the Monday following, the latter had to leave on a visit to Barrie on Lake Simcoe. In the morning about an hour was spent together in reading and prayer; Mrs. Oliver read the "Keeping Psalm" (Psalm cxxxi.), and tenderly commended her friend to the Divine care. She was always kind and considerate to all, but on this occasion she was unusually so. A shade of sadness, a thing unusual with her, rested upon her bright face on parting with Miss Somerset.

A week later Mrs. Oliver returned to Hamilton to find her sister, Mrs. Small, dangerously ill. During the first week in May, she daily visited the invalid, climbing the "Mountain" on foot for that purpose. Such exertion, together with

anxiety over one she loved so well, evidently taxed her feeble strength, for on the 4th she wrote to Miss Somerset:

I get so tired toiling up the mountain.

In the same letter, after describing her sister's bodily condition, she said:

But you know, no ~~disease~~ need of its necessity run its course; for we look not for death and separation but for the Lord's coming.

And then she added a postscript:

All is well. Love worketh no ill, and "God is love."

It was her last-penned message, and was characteristic of her life of faith, fed, as it had been for so many years, with the hope of the Lord's return.

On the following Lord's Day, May 7th, she joined her fellow-worshippers at the Lord's Table for the last time. Few knew the meaning and privilege of worship better, or enjoyed it to a higher degree, than she did! One of her sayings on the subject was: "I ask myself sometimes, as I go to the Lord's Table, 'What is the size of my golden spoon full of incense, and how far do I enter into God's estimate of the preciousness of Christ?'" Those who knew her best, knew that her "spoon" was no small one, neither the "frankincense" that it contained was at all scant.

At the close of the worship meeting someone asked her concerning her sister's condition. She replied—"She is so weak that she might be at home any moment."

Little did she (or her friends) think that her own departure would precede her sister's by ten days; or that it was her last Lord's Day on earth! that before the next dawned she would have spent the brightest and happiest period of her being with her Lord! In the afternoon she met her Bible Class, when, as usual, a goodly number were present. She read as a lesson the whole of Matthew, chapter xvi., and then gave a lengthy and practical exposition of the same, an outline of which has been fortunately preserved. Among other things she dwelt upon were:—The signs of the times—the coming of the Lord—the need of living in constant expectation of that event—The Father alone knowing the hour of His advent—a warning against the leaven of the Pharisees (hypocrisy), and the Sadducees (unbelief)—Jonah, a type of the Lord in death and resurrection—the glorious resurrection of those who are Christ's—death swallowed up in victory; closing her lesson with an exhortation on the words, "Be ye steadfast," etc. (I Cor. xv. 58).

It was a message well suited to the closing hours of nearly forty-five years of sanctified intelligent service for God, and also a beautiful crown upon the brow of an unselfish and consecrated life.

Two members of her Bible Class, one a trained nurse, remained to tea; and, as usual in that home, the time was spent in godly conversation.

On the approach of the hour for the evening service at the Hall, the three hurried away lest they should be late.

On the way, Mrs. Oliver was suddenly seized with a terrible pain in her head, and exclaimed, "Oh! I have never had such a pain as this before." Immediately she staggered forward as if about to fall. She was upheld by her companions, a passing cab was hailed, and she was taken home. When it was suggested a doctor should be sent for at once, she said, "You may send for him—but—it is all over. There is no more help—now."

She soon after lapsed into unconsciousness, and continued in that condition until her decease. All that medical skill and attentive nursing by trained hands could do, were in vain. The sorrowing ones, while they watched by her, longed for one more word from the lips which had so often spoken to them of the Lord Jesus. But the last message had been given, and the final word had been uttered.

On Tuesday, May the 9th, as the sun began declining towards the west, her happy spirit without a visible struggle, was "absent from the body and at home with the Lord."

A few days later, and weeping relatives and

friends deposited her precious remains beside those of her beloved husband, where they together rest as "Seed sown for the first resurrection." Mr. and Mrs. Oliver were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not long divided, being separated but three years, one month, and ten days. Pilgrim feet often stand by their graveside, and gather, as they do so, fresh inspiration for what remains of the journey.

"Then pass, ye mourners, cheerily on
Through prayer unto the tomb;
Still as ye watch life's falling leaf,
Gathering from every loss and grief,
Hope of new spring and endless home.

"Then cheerily to your work again,
With hearts new-braced and set
To run, untired, love's blessed race,
As meet for those, who face to face
Over the grave their Lord have met."

—JOHN KEBLE.

CHAPTER XI

"FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN"

"Eye of God's Word! where'er we turn,
Ever upon us! Thy keen gaze
Can all the depths of sin discern,
Unravel every bosom's maze.

"Who that has felt Thy glance of dread
Thrill through his heart's remotest cells,
About his path, about his bed,
Can doubt what Spirit in thee dwells?"
—JOHN KEBLE.

IT has been well and wisely stated that, "He who shall knock at the door of Scripture with the hand of faith, will find it opened by the Christ of God. But let him enter carefully, with unshod feet, for it is holy ground."

Mrs. Oliver was one among those who had "knocked" at the door of Revelation, and it had been "opened" to her, and she had gone far into the interior; hence her knowledge of its treasures was beyond the measure of most. It is not too much to say that few women ever had a more perfect acquaintance with the contents of the sixty-six volumes composing the Divine Library. And hers, be it said, was no mere literal *scribish* acquaintance with the Word of God, but a deep spiritual knowledge of the same.

In the later years of her life she had, like the Psalmist, "more understanding than all her

teachers." A word may be said as to her methods of study. She had examined the Scriptures both telescopically and microscopically (so to speak); hence she was able to give the scope and teaching of any particular book, or complete outline of the whole Bible, and also to impart clear and helpful teaching in the way of careful and correct exposition upon type, prophecy, and doctrine. In one word, she was an exegete—a rarity indeed among women.

Her knowledge of the Word was only excelled by her love for it; and it was this beautiful and needful blending of the two which enabled her in conversation, in teaching, and in writing, to bring out of its treasury "things new and old."

She was possessed of three essentials to an acceptable and fruitful ministry: a deep spiritual knowledge of the truth, ability to express herself in a clear and convincing manner, and a true love both for the truth and those whom she taught.

It only remains to be said:—Her ministry of the Word (so far as the writer is aware) was confined to her own sex; though at times she would, in private conversation with some young disciple of the opposite sex, Priscilla-like, endeavour to "instruct him in the way of God more perfectly"—a thing stamped with God's approval. Hence her expositions of the Scriptures partook more of a private than a public character, and she therefore never took to the public platform, as some women have done. Yet hundreds of wives, mothers, and daughters, were comforted and strengthened by

her unique and spiritual ministry ; and scores were led to the Lord, many of whom are now with Him, while others are yet toiling on amid the shadows and sorrows of this life.

It is a cause for sincere regret that so few fragments of her unique ministry are extant, and those alone in the shape of "notes" *of*, or *for*, Bible Readings.

Believing that some of these may be useful to Bible students and others, a selection of two or three is given in this closing chapter, which will not only show how varied and valuable was her ministry, but be of real help. The first reading (written out before her marriage) consists of condensed notes on a very solemn and practical theme, and one needing special emphasis in a day of peculiar laxity among professed Christians, is upon :

"THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST."

"The Church is composed of Jews and Gentiles, and is the body—the bride—of Christ. Her present condition and future prospect—the 'home' being prepared for her and her 'making ready'—*Rapture*—etymology and meaning of the word—its *literal* significance—'caught away'—how and when accomplished—Caught away from what?—to what? Notice the position of the Church in the kingdom—it is in the kingdom. Before that, the Marriage Supper takes place—and before even that, the *Judgment Seat* is set up, that He may satisfy Him-

self and her that the Church He takes home and presents to the Father is 'holy and without blemish.' The 'mystery' will at that time be fully revealed—(1) to the Church herself; (2) to the angels, who have been long looking into and endeavouring to 'learn by the Church the manifold wisdom of God'; (3) to the 'world,' that it may believe. Contrast with other judgments, both as to design and mode, the judgment of the Church for—reward—for what? Services. Any punishment?—any thought of disgrace?—of remorse? None whatever!

THE JUDGE.

"Christ Himself—the One who has just come down to meet the Church in the air to gather her round Himself, who is no *stranger* to her walk and warfare—One who has all along known her intimately and communed with her lovingly—Who has helped her in her difficulties, cheered her in her loneliness—guided her in perplexities—nurtured and comforted her in sorrow—borne with her in her wanderings—and at last, after however erratic a course, brought her home for ever to *Himself*. *Therefore*, He judges not to condemn but to approve. Every cup of cold water, every victory over self and sin, over Satan and the world; every word, however feeble, spoken to His honour, shall be acknowledged and rewarded then. But will there be no condemnation? Yes; but *not* of persons, only of deeds. For every deed He can approve, He bestows a reward upon the *person*, but every

deed He cannot commend, will be trampled down by the feet of brass, and consumed as 'wood, hay, stubble' in the fire, with the hearty 'Amen, Hallelujah!' of the person by whom the deed was wrought. The personal description of the Judge we get in the first chapter of the Revelation, but it ends with—and this for even one poor feeble believer without one commendable deed—'He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last, He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death.'

THE TIME.

"Certainly before the marriage, since He desires to present her to Himself a glorious, spotless Church—certainly before He takes the bride into the Father's house—before He reappears with her to judge the nations, and to rule in righteousness. What follows? If that be the first event after the taking up of the Church—a seven years' interval before she returns with her Lord to earth—What is going on *here* during the time? Men are going on in sin—there is rapid growth of evil. What is going on above? A *week*—seven years at least of intimate communion between the Christ and His Church, the bridal week. *Never* before has the Church, complete, enjoyed full communion—unbroken now—joy with which none intermeddeth, ending in her coming forth, after learning the deep secrets of His love and the designs of

the Father for His glorious exaltation, to share with Him His royal throne, and to exhibit the union, 'that the world may believe.'

THE MANNER.

"How He will take each one back along the wilderness way—how many things we thought had advanced His cause have really been a hindrance; on the other hand, how many acts unnoticed by us because they were the spontaneous outflow of the Divine life, of which we were made partakers, will then in His hand sparkle with a lustre we had never dreamed lay hidden in them. How many misunderstandings, and misrepresentations, and mistakes experienced by us all, will be righted; how many estranged believers will embrace before that judgment-seat, and acknowledge how they each have erred.

LESSONS.

"Practical bearing of the subject. Walk in the light of that day—judge ourselves in respect of walk and conversation, that we be not then judged—in respect of what we understand and teach, that we may not be making grave mistakes for the Lord to correct them. He will cleanse His Church in *that* day with the 'washing of water by the Word.' We have the same Word now wherewith to cleanse our way—let us take heed thereto. *Nothing* then, however apparently good,

will stand the test of fire, that is not of Christ—let us see to it that self be put out of sight, and Christ alone have place in our motives or action. Let the thought of the joy that will thrill through the corporate Church when she sees that *all* that has stood the test of the fire is of Him, while all that has flared or smouldered away was of self, animate us individually *now* to endeavour, not passively or negatively, but actively or positively, in *each* action to *please* Him. Oh, what an honour! We may try to please Him, and we may hope to succeed—even while we work for the reward we need not wait for it—His approving smile, the highest reward our renewed minds can understand or desire, we may be conscious of even while we work and wait. Lastly, let us manifest grace in our judgment of each other; judge nothing before the time; leave each other to Him whom we individually serve . . . remembering that while we may see grave faults, the searching gaze of those eyes of fire never fails to find out the least spark of God-likeness, and that when the hidden things are brought to light, '*every man shall have praise of God.*' *Termination*, as in all dispensations, by judgment—on Satan—on his hosts.

RANGE.

"From dawn to dark?—from evening to morning?
—neither—peculiar—'one' day—day all the time
—preceded by 'darkness, gross darkness'—but
the day itself shall have nothing to do with night

—even at evening time it shall be light—‘the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold.’ The Sun of Righteousness never *sets*—His one thousand years’ course terminates, not in a twilight, but in the triumph of banishing into the blackness of darkness for ever the most violent and daring opposers of His healing rays—the ‘Sun’ while *the day* lasts—afterwards and for ever the glory of God and of the Lamb, the light of the earthly as of the heavenly people.”

Mrs. Oliver’s teaching was always of a practical and often of a very solemn and heart-searching character. Yet from her lips it was ever “truth in love,” and was therefore far removed from much that is to-day called “faithful ministry,” which has neither “bowels” nor “mercies” in it, and which consequently and deservedly fails of its object.

The following condensed “notes” of a study on the Church’s responsibility, is a good example of her faithful, practical messages.

II

THE CHURCH: HER OBLIGATIONS.

“Her obligation is to spread the truth of God, and to honour the Lord by service one to another.

“The truth must be known before it is either

preached or acted upon, therefore every individual member must make it a point to know it:

1. By close attention in private to the Word.
2. By attending every meeting possible where the object is an enlarged acquaintance with God's truth.
3. By putting it in practice—'He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine.'

"Again, no member of *the* Church should lose an opportunity plainly presented, either in private or in public, of imparting knowledge of God and His ways to the believer and to the unconverted. Then *Churches* should also make provision for regular and methodical means of making the truth known *to the saints first—after that*, the Gospel. An Assembly thinking lightly of this obligation will never receive the commendation—'From you sounded out the word of life.'

"Lastly, Assemblies should *unite* for the purpose of enlarging and dispensing their knowledge.

SERVICE.

"As distinct from testimony, is to behave to every brother as taking the first place in activity and the last place in name. Then the 'chief' will be he who is with the others as 'one that serves.' In the absence of our Head, the alabaster box can be broken over the feet of the believer now, and the 'towel' will be in requisition over and over again, if one have but grace to use it with the

gentleness as well as the faithfulness of the Master. To wash one another's feet has a more refreshing and stimulating effect than to throw cold water in one another's faces. When we have learned 'by love to serve one another,' then will our walk be what it should be, and our work deserve the praise which 'every man' will have."

The annexed "notes" of a study of Matthew xiii. are a fair illustration of her power to impart instruction upon what is technically known as "dispensational truth"—that is, Bible truth relating to the "Jew, Gentile, and Church of God," and correlative subjects.

The reader's knowledge of the seven parables of the Lord and their teaching would be enhanced if the "notes" were read side by side with the chapter in which they are found.

And real spiritual profit would no doubt follow meditation upon both.

III

THE SEVEN PARABLES OF THE LORD.

(MATTHEW XIII.)

"He came unto His own things, and His own people received Him not." They rejected Him as *priest* (chap. xii. 5, 6), as *prophet* (ver. 41), and as *King* (ver. 42). Then the Lord changes His attitude (symbolically), repudiates earthly relation-

ship, and leaves the *house* for the sea-side, always connected with the extension of blessing to the Gentiles.

"Now commence the series of parables of 'the mysteries of the kingdom.' The kingdom in mystery is not the kingdom in a hidden working, but the truth of the kingdom presented in mystery—or parable—form. These parables are seven in number. The first four give us the inception, growth, and development of the kingdom in time of formation. The first gives us the principle that not descent from Abraham, but reception of the Word, is the essential thing. Through death to life God gives the seed sown a resurrection. This parable the Lord explains fully to his disciples, yet in the hearing of the multitude. It is the key to all other parables (Mark iv. 13). On this as a base, he builds the other three.

WHEAT AND TARES.

"The seed that has fallen on good ground has produced 'new creatures.' These are sown in the field—the world.

MUSTARD SEED.

"Abnormal growth — and diversion from its proper use—affords lodgment for evil *agencies*—Satan and his emissaries.

LEAVEN.

"*Evil principles* at work—three measures, three

kinds of leaven—of Pharisees, hypocrisy; of Sadducees, Rationalism or infidelity; of Herod, worldly policy, popularity, etc.

"Three measures (one ephah). Compare Zech. v. 5-11. Verse 34, shows that this group is complete in itself—and is all that is spoken by the sea-side. There are three classes—Jew, Gentile, and Church of God. These parables are universally applicable whether *kingdom* gospel or the gospel of the grace of God is being preached—*each part* of what will be the millennial kingdom is in its formation characterized by the same things, viz.: seed sown in unproductive ground—tares sown by the enemy—evil agencies—evil principles.

"The Lord had (so to speak) repudiated His family relationship and gone out of the *house*. Now He returned *into* the *house* with His new family—His disciples. There He expounded in full, the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and uses it as a base upon which to build other three.

"This group consists of parables showing the *classes* which compose the kingdom in the day of its manifestation. The last three are found nowhere else but in this *gospel* of the *kingdom*.

TREASURE.

"Israel (Exod. xix. 5)—'all the earth is Mine'—it is purchased for the sake of the *treasure*—in Malachi iii. 17, jewels—peculiar treasure. In Revelation v. we have the title-deeds of the purchased

field (the world) handed to the Purchaser—'the Lamb as it had been slain.' The main part of the book of Revelation is occupied with the preparation of the field for the sake of the treasure which is ultimately displayed in the land, and becomes the centre of blessing to the whole earth.

PEARL.

"Found in the sea—another thought obtains here in addition to the cost of purchase—the risk of life in pearl fishing—the going down to the *depths*—also the fact that while the treasure is displayed in the place of its development, the pearl is taken to beautify the home of the finder and purchaser. It answers to the beautiful heavenly city—the New Jerusalem—the Church. Twelve 'goodly pearls' are also obtained for the wall, and become the Gates of Praise in the Walls of Salvation.

THE DRAG-NET.

"Cast into the sea—the Gentile world. When? After the rapture and before the Millennium and the tribulation. Not twelve fishermen, but twelve times twelve hundred sealed for testimony, cast the net. They gather of every kind. A little different from the present Gospel work, which is more like fishing with a rod and line and occasionally securing a 'bite.' Moreover, the Gospeller does not leave it to the end of the age to test the goodness of the fish brought in—he examines it critically, and decides at once. If this parable

means present-day work, we are doing wrong not to leave the discrimination to the 'angels.'

"But how beautifully these three are based upon the second parable. When the day, the millennial day, dawns—we have Israel told to 'Arise and shine,' for her light is come—the light of the New Jerusalem above—the nations are called to walk in that light—the light of the Lord. 'Then shall the righteous' nation—the righteous Church—and the righteous nations—all 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

"An important point in this wonderful chapter is the quotation from Isaiah vi. 9, 10. It occurs wherever there is a change of attitude towards Israel. Here it occurs after the rejection of the Lord, in chapter xii., as priest—one greater than Jonas ; as king—one greater than Solomon. Again in John xii. it occurs when, not satisfied with the rejection of His testimony, they were about to answer Him by the cross. In Acts xxviii. 25-28, Paul finishes his testimony to the Jews, and summarises the result of the whole of the Acts of the Holy Ghost in that remarkable book, with this quotation, adding: 'The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *they will hear.*' Hence the Gospel of the grace of God in the Epistle to the Romans. Here again, in chapter xi. 8, he quotes it once more, showing how the time of blindness, darkness, and unbelief, will finally clear away, and all Israel shall be saved by grace.

"We have only to remember that not *a secret*

kingdom but *the secrets of the kingdom*—a very different thing—are here taught in seven parables. The whole then unfolds naturally, and we become truly ‘householders.’ Would God the very simple outlines of dispensational truth were better understood by those who profess to be teachers!”

To the closing words we would add a hearty and reverent Amen!

CHAPTER XII

"THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"

"Not with the light and vain,
The man of idle feet and sinful eyes;
Not with the world's gay, ever-smiling train—
My lot be with the grave and wise.

"With them I'd walk each day,
From them time's solemn lessons would I learn,
That false from true, and true from false, I
Each hour more patiently discern."

—HORATIUS BONAR.

IT has been the writer's privilege to pay three visits to the fair Dominion of Canada.

The first visit was made in the year 1895; the second in the years 1896-7; and the third during the early part of 1901.

It was on the occasion of his going to Canada in 1895 that he first met Mr. and Mrs. Oliver, of whom he had previously heard. In the Summer of that year he spent some never-to-be-forgotten days in their genial society. On his second visit to Canada he stayed with them for a whole month; and then paid them a second short visit on his way to the United States.

His last sojourn beneath their roof was in January and part of February, 1901. He journeyed from New York to Hamilton to see them, and renew the communion which had been so precious to each.

He shall ever be thankful for that last visit, as, three months after parting with them, beloved Mr. Oliver passed away.

He often thinks of the happy days spent with them in communion over the Word and work of God; and gathers fresh strength for toil from the remembrance of those seasons.

One day in their home was much the same as another; but each one was spent with God. The principal spiritual features of a day with them may be given in a few sentences.

On assembling at the breakfast-table, the portions of Scripture for the day were read from the well-known "Daily Light,"* when suitable and suggestive remarks generally followed. After the meal, the "gem-bowl" was passed from hand to hand, when each took out a text and read it aloud. Brief, helpful conversation followed. A hymn would be sung; then came the reading of the Scriptures; closing the exercises of the morning with prayer and praise.

At dinner-time the Scriptures were again read, and spiritual conversation was engaged in. The injunction, "Let your speech be alway with *grace* seasoned with salt," was carried out in that house so that the conversation always "ministered *grace* unto the hearers."

At the evening meal the refreshing, God-honouring exercises of the morning were repeated. The

* "Daily Light": S. Bagster & Son, London, England; John Ritchie, Kilmarnock, Scotland.

"Daily Light," the "gem-bowl," and the Word of God, were once more in requisition, followed by prayer and praise.

If there were no service in an evening at the Hall where Mr. and Mrs. Oliver attended, there would be in their home a Bible Class for women, or a conversational meeting for young Christians, or perhaps the evening would be spent in counseling the perplexed and anxious who would come in for help. If any "teacher of good things" were staying with them—which was frequently the case—friends would be gathered together for a Bible-reading.

And thus the days spent in that home were "days of heaven on earth," because spent in communion with and in service for God.

Oh, for more of such homes among Christians! If they were but multiplied, there would soon be a happier, healthier condition of things in the Church of God, and she would then have greater power in the world, and be more used of her God.

Surely it was such a home as theirs was that the gifted writer of "The Christian Year" had in his mind when he wrote:

**"Around each pure domestic shrine,
Bright flowers of Eden bloom and twine;
Our hearths are altars all:
The prayers of hungry souls and poor,
Like armed angels at the door,
Our unseen foes appal."**

In such an atmosphere as pervaded that house, the dead professor of religion, the confirmed

backslider, or the carnal Christian, would be unhappy; yet it was a centre of attraction to godly ones who longed for communion in spiritual things.

Mrs. Barbauld in her poem, "The Blessedness of Christian Fellowship," describes such souls as congregated from time to time in the house of our departed friends on King William Street:

"How blest the sacred tie that binds,
In union sweet, according minds!
How swift the heavenly course they run,
Whose hearts, whose faith, whose hopes, are one!

"To each the soul of each how dear!
What jealous love! What holy fear!
How doth the generous flame within
Refine from earth and cleanse from sin!

"Together both they seek the place
Where God reveals His glorious face:
How high, how strong, their raptures swell,
There's none but kindred souls can tell!"

Next in importance and value to the seasons spent in immediate communion with God, are the hours devoted to spiritual communion with His people. The former afford the highest and holiest experience a saint can know on earth, while the latter must rank next in blessing to it.

The relationship existing between God's people, and the close and tender ties which bind them together, should enable them to have communion in everything of a spiritual kind and character; though heart-to-heart fellowship can only be fully realized when each is walking with God.

Devout Charles Bridges well said: "To meet the Christian in ordinary courtesy, not in unity of heart, is a sign of an unspiritual walk with God. Fellowship with God is 'walking in the light'; fellowship with one another is the natural outflow."

This witness, if true for individual communion with God, is reflected in the collective communion of His people. They who have little or no communion with their fellow-Christians, in the highest and holiest things common to them in the Lord, as a rule would be found to have little or no fellowship with God. They cannot have the lower thing if they have not the higher. Communion with Him will regulate the thoughts, feelings, words, and ways, with regard to His people, be they where they may. No one holding fellowship with God could speak evil of another, much less invent and disseminate a falsehood concerning another. Such things are of the darkness and not of the light, for "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now . . . he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John ii. 9-11).

Of the prevalent sin of evil-speaking among professed Christians, a living Spanish writer has well said: "Whatever flows from it is infected, and poisons whatever it approaches; even its praises are poisoned, its applause malicious, its silence criminal; its gestures, motions, and

looks, have all their venom, and spread it each their own way."

Such a thing can have no existence within the sacred region of communion with God, and is unknown in the happy circle of the "communion of saints"; it belongs to another region and to another order of things, with which the spiritual mind desires to be unacquainted.

Intercourse between departed Christian friends in heaven and those on the earth there cannot possibly be. But in a modified sense those on earth can hold communion with those in heaven. But how? By recalling those high ideals they set themselves so strenuously to realize while here; by thinking upon their kind words, tender deeds, and pious ways; by dwelling upon those reminiscences of them stored in the archives of memory. Or as one has beautifully said: "The thoughts and feelings they once entertained and recorded, but concealed from all, until after death the hand of affection, entrusted with those rich remains, gave over to the world or the Church a legacy of wisdom which the living voice had never uttered; these thoughts and emotions may pass through your mind now, till your own thoughts and emotions beat in unison with those . . . of the departed. In this sense, and to this extent, you have communion with them."

In such a sense the careful and sympathetic reader of this memorial volume may have communion with the subject of it.

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